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BOOK REVIEW 1990-91

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THE BOOK REVIEW

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WORLD BOOK FAIR–1990 SPECIAL

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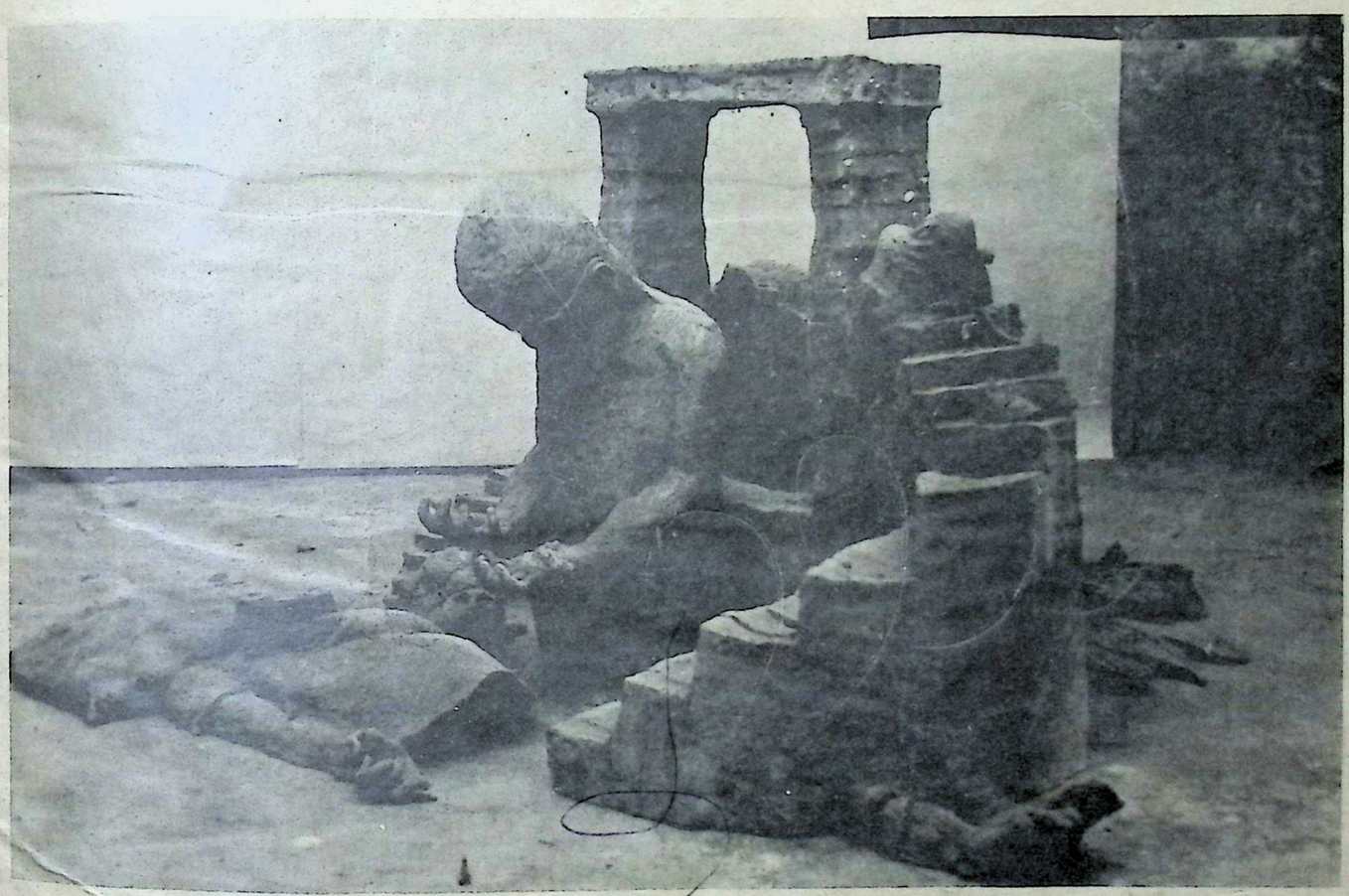

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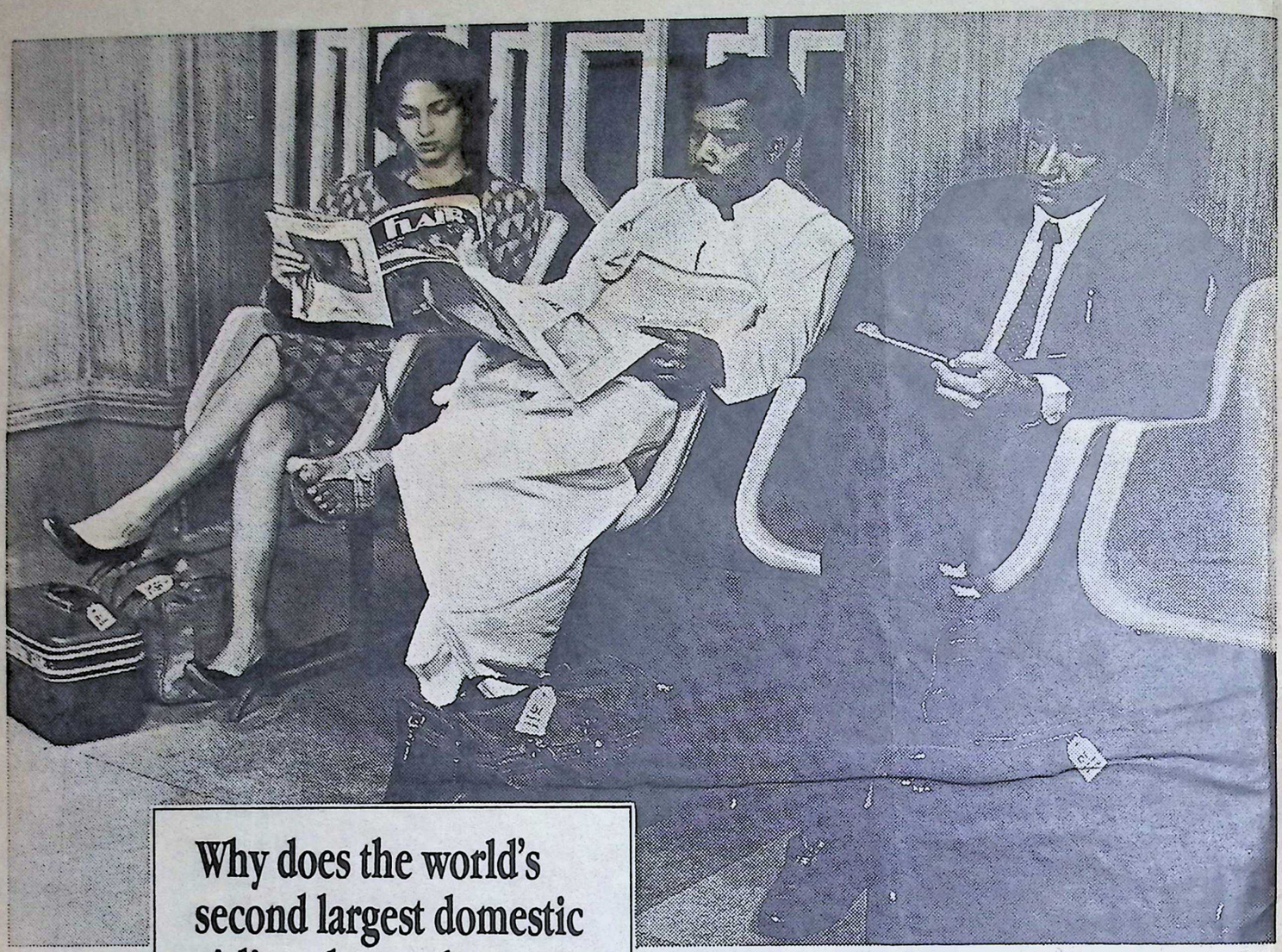

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There is a sense of *deja vu* about the appearance of this issue of *The Book Review* at the World Book Fair this year. Fifteen years ago, it was at another world book fair that the journal made its debut. It was then a heady experience for the founder editors to sport copies of the newly-minted first edition, priced at Rs.3.00 (Annual subscription Rs.10.00!), among the crowds that thronged the book fair. The editorial note expressed the hope that *The Book Review* would focus the attention of the reading public to the significant books published in India and abroad. Misgivings about the viability of such a journal had, by the end of the first year, given place to buoyant hope and optimism about its future, and the active support of the publishers, scholars and the lay reader became something one could count on.

We seem to have come full circle since that cold blustery January of 1976. Fourteen years of the rough with the smooth, the inevitable ups and downs, of the editors standing in as proof-readers, lay-out artists and despatch clerks down to licking stamps to the more secure backing of Nikhil Chakravartty's Perspective Publications. The format changed, Abu's crow made its appearance and disappeared a few years later, and then one whole year in between when no issues of the journal came out. All through this, basically *The Book Review* had remained a cottage industry at best.

With the launching of the Book Review Literary Trust and with this special issue for the World Book Fair 1990, we hope to make a departure from that. A corpus of funds, a wider distribution network and a new tabloid format which will enable us to provide much more reading matter will, we hope, launch *The Book Review* in a big way.

Ambitious schemes apart, we would however like to assure our readers that the basically serious approach to the reviewing of books which has characterized the journal's editorial policy will remain unchanged. As the Indian publishing industry approaches a coming-of-age era, with its new-found maturity and confidence, the sheer numbers of publications make the task of a judicious selection and reviewing of them one of paramount importance. Critical reviews, we believe, ought to be a catalyst to creative writing as well as a filip to quality in production.

A window to the world of books we have striven to be, admittedly a small oriole window so far. In the nineties, we hope to succeed better in focussing effectively on the Indian languages scene. The astringent prose, the moving poetry of writers grappling with the harsh realities that is India, should be the literary heritage of the whole nation. We hope that reviews of those works in English will imbue a sense of urgency among publishers to promote their translations into English and other Indian languages.

If there is a fairy godmother-or-someone-something of that ilk watching over *The Book Review*, the number of wishes its founder-editors would crave would certainly exceed the proverbial fairly tale three: generous donors who voluntarily sign handsome cheques, reviewers who actually stick to deadlines, scholars and academics vying with one another to write review articles, erudite bilingual reviewers and, not the least, good paper which costs nothing! Not tall orders, most of these, for *The Book Review* has already a generous sample of each of these in its goodwill coffers. And so a new beginning is made.

■

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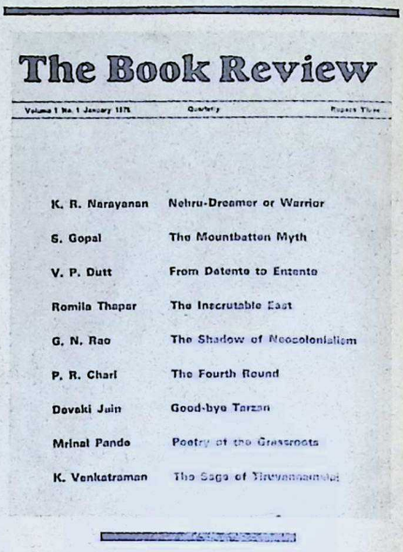
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THE STATESMAN
February 9, 1976

Barring the Times Literary Supplement there are few publications which devote themselves entirely to reviewing, and none we know of in India. It is therefore a pleasure to welcome the first number of the Book Review.... The reviews seem detailed an serious; some of the reviewers are distinguished.....

❖

PATRIOT MAGAZINE
February 8, 1976

This is a refreshingly new venture in journalism in India, and original in conception since it consists entirely of reviews of books. A journal of this kind that helps to stimulate public interest in the reading of books should be considered timely.....

❖

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
February 2, 1976

"The Book Review," a quarterly, has an impressive list of reviewers if the first issue is any indication. A certain perceptiveness is also apparent in its selection of books including the space it has set apart for the books published in our regional languages.....

❖

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A BLUEPRINT FOR MODERNISM

K.R. Narayanan

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: LETTERS TO CHIEF MINISTERS—1947-1964
VOLUME 5

General Editor: G. Parthasarathi

Published by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial fund and distributed by Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 650, Rs.200.00

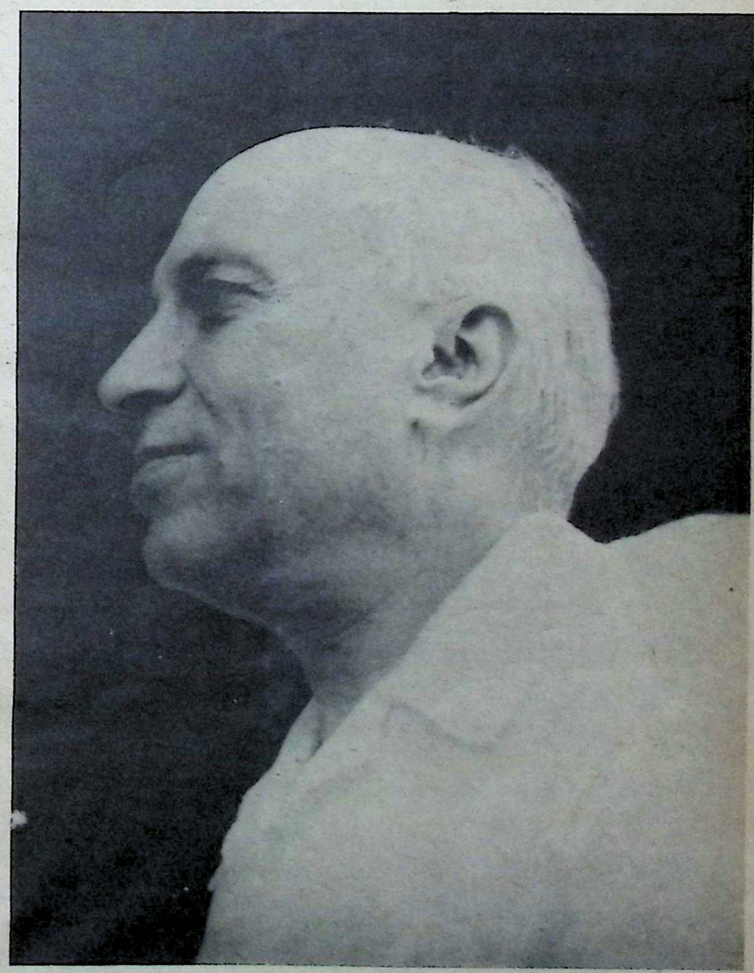
Jawaharlal Nehru was an adept in the now lost art of letter-writing, perhaps an art that has been lost irretrievably as far as Prime Ministers are concerned. Be they to his daughter or to the Chief Ministers or to his friends and colleagues he delighted in writing letters out of some compulsive urge to communicate, to exhort and to enlighten or merely to clarify events and issues for himself. The contemplative nature of his personality and the literary bent of his mind contributed to this epistolary habit while a sense of history egged him on to it.

In regard to the letters to the Chief Ministers Nehru undoubtedly had an additional and definite purpose in mind—to instruct those who were virtually the rulers of the land in the basic policies that he was following as Prime Minister and to elevate their thoughts from the local and the regional level to an all-India and global plane. For a responsive and imaginative Chief Minister there were enough in these letters in the way of directives and instructions for political and administrative actions to be taken at the State level. At the very minimum they provided broad, beckoning guidelines for the governance of the States. For us today they form authentic and lively records of the history of a momentous period and provide valuable insights into the workings of the mind of the prime actor in that historical drama. Written in limpid prose with effortless ease, without equivocations, posturings and embellishments, these letters are as pleasant to read as they are informative and edifying.

Covering the period from 1958 to 1964, the letters in this fifth and the last volume cover the sunset years of Nehru's life and Prime Ministership. Partaking of the quality of the sunset perhaps, there is a certain mellowness about these letters and also a diffused summing-up of the thoughts, ideas and themes which had dominated Nehru's life and politics. Though during most of the period in question China had loomed large for Nehru and India, the letters which were, after all contemporary records, do not show Nehru as a person too much obsessed with it or broken-hearted by it. Major part of the volume consists of discussion on issues other than China—planning, agricultural growth, food production, industrialization, education, village panchayats, village cooperatives, communalism, national integration, foreign policy, world peace and a host of secondary questions. He dealt with these issues independently and as integral parts of the great theme of nation-building and national defence. All this does not mean that Nehru was not profoundly shocked and disappointed with what China had done to India and that he did not feel acute embarrassment over what appeared to be a calculated attack on the basic policies that he was pursuing in the world. "It is a tragedy", he wrote soon after the massive Chinese attacks were launched "that we who have stood for peace everywhere should be attacked in this way and be compelled to resist attack by arms." This underlying strain of disillusionment did not prevent him from rising to the Chinese challenge with renewed faith in his basic policies. He was, in fact, stimulated by the reaction of the Indian people to the challenge . . . "I have no feeling of depression", he wrote, "rather I have a feeling of joy and satisfaction that we have to face this crisis as a united people and with good heart. I feel confident that we shall emerge out of it stronger in every way, and chastened by what we have experienced and will experience."

This is no occasion to elaborate on Nehru's China policy. The important point is that from the time the Tibet question cropped up he had given a great deal of thought to it. In a letter of May 1959 Nehru harked back to the early fifties when the question first came up. He revealed how military intervention was then ruled out on military advice. "For us to refuse to acknowledge Chinese suzerainty", he continued, "would not have helped Tibet in the slightest. It would have meant not only a complete break with China, but also a much harsher occupation of Tibet right up to our frontiers, as India would then have been considered a hostile country with designs on Tibet." I would go a little further and say that had India interfered in Tibet then and refused to accept Tibet as an autonomous region of China, the tension on our border would have been built up from the early fifties onwards and the Sino-Indian border dispute could well have been sucked into the orbit of the Cold War.

Nehru does not discuss the 1962 war in any detail in these letters. But there is enough in them for us to form a clear idea of his assessment. Dealing with the Indian failure on the Eastern front he wrote: "Looking at it from a purely military point of view, we should have selected a much more effective line of



K.R. Narayanan, a former member of the Indian Foreign Service and India's ambassador to China (1976-78) and the United States (1980-84), has served as the vice-chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (1979-80) and as the minister of state for Science and Technology in the Rajiv Gandhi administration. He is at present an M.P. in the ninth Lok Sabha.

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defence which was connected by roads at least to our main supply centres. This, however, would have entailed retiring in our own territory and allowing the Chinese to march along it without major fighting. Although it was the wiser thing to do, it was not a pleasant course to follow." This was a case of political considerations and the anticipated outcry from the public coming in the way of adopting a wiser military course. But then if part of your sovereign territory happened to be militarily difficult to defend, was it possible for a democratic country to leave it to be overrun by an enemy, especially if the objective of the enemy was to have the Government of the country toppled?

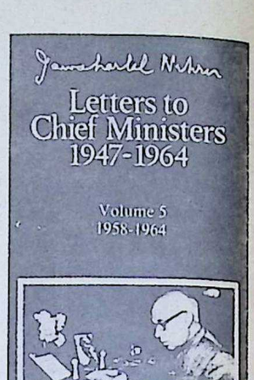
> *"It is a tragedy that we who have stood for peace everywhere should be attacked in this way and be compelled to resist attack by arms.... I have no feeling of depression, rather I have a feeling of joy and satisfaction that we have to face this crisis as a united people and with good heart."*

There is a mild hint in one of Nehru's letters that the hurried withdrawal from points in the North-east was one of the military mistakes of the war. "The faults such as occurred were of the local Commanders of Brigades and the like who had to decide on the spur of the moment what they should do when they were being overwhelmed by large numbers of the enemy." One cannot help feeling that had these local decisions were to stand and fight rather than hurriedly to withdraw, the march of the Chinese forces could have been halted at least for some time averting the image of humiliating retreat of the Indian army at first contact with the Chinese forces. As it happened if there was a hold-up of the Chinese army for even twenty-four hours the outcome would not have appeared a debacle for the Indian army and the unilateral Chinese cease-fire and withdrawal a gesture of magnanimity.

In one of the letters there is an attempt to analyse the motives of the Chinese in attacking India. In this Nehru drew upon the views of Vice-President Kardelj of Yugoslavia and Ali Sabry of Egypt. Both these leaders of non-alignment were of the view that China had found that non-aligned India had become a stumbling block in the way of their world objectives and if they could defeat and humiliate India and make it succumb before China or drive it to the Western camp it would have signified the end of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence espoused by Nehru and opposed by Mao Zedong through his dismal doctrine of the inevitability of war. The most important and difficult decision for Nehru in that critical situation was to stick to his basic policy in the face of what seemed to be disaster. "We have to adhere to non-alignment fully," he wrote, "and we have not to put Russia and China in the same basket. That would be utter folly and would be playing into China's hands, just as our giving up non-alignment would be falling into the Chinese trap completely." This decision was combined with Nehru's determination to build up India's defensive and economic strength giving highest priority to achieving self-reliant capacity in manufacture of weapons and equipments of war.

It is often forgotten that non-alignment, far from having been discredited in the 1962 crisis, actually served India in getting world support in that dark hour including the understanding and support of both the superpowers, and of the Third World countries as shown by the Colombo Proposals. It also helped India in the political and propaganda war that followed the Chinese cease-fire and withdrawal. It is appropriate to note here that if Nehru had not stood up firmly for non-alignment at that time the future of that movement would have been very different. Though he was hurt and humiliated in that crisis Nehru would have been pleased to see that those who opposed his basic policies and also his policy towards China are today returning to his basic concepts including the Bhai-Bhai approach. What is even more satisfying for him would be the movement of China herself to a position of peaceful coexistence and abandonment of cold war and confrontationist military alliances adopting what is a non-aligned posture in the world describing her stand as an independent policy of deciding each international issue on merits.

In 1962 and 63 Nehru had to face not only the aftermath of the Indian debacle in the Chinese war internally as well as externally, but stand up to the arm-twisting pressures on the Kashmir question by the Western powers who wanted to take advantage of the moment of India's discomfiture. The flexible and firm position taken by India in that context is particularly noteworthy. He wrote to the Chief Ministers his appreciation of the basic fact that "our struggle against China and our difficulties with Pakistan are closely mixed" and that "the Valley is the base of the struggle and the way to Ladakh." He also spelt out his basic appraisal that "Pakistan's bitter attitude towards India which concentrates, for the present, on the Kashmir issue,...is much deeper and wider than the Kashmir issue." This is an aspect that India can ill-afford to ignore. But Nehru also exhorted: "We should not think in terms of permanent enemies and we should always leave the door open for friendship." Towards the end of his life Nehru went much beyond this and envisaged not only resolution of problems between India and Pakistan, but closer cooperation and even some sort of a con-federal union maintaining the independence and sovereignty of each. That was, however, not spelt out in these letters. There is no evidence that he felt that this closer cooperation could come about without resolving existing problems and without preserving the basic principles that are at the root of the unity and stability of the Indian State.



There is a good deal in this volume on foreign affairs. Nehru's deep and life-long passion for peace, disarmament, relaxation of tensions, and world cooperation remained undiminished. His fundamental appreciation of the world situation was that it was moving towards coexistence and cooperation, and his basic foreign policy, far from being rendered out of date, was being vindicated. It was a tribute to his policy that Krushchev had proposed him as a participant in the summit Conference of great powers that he advocated. At the same time Nehru was depressed with the malaise he noticed in world affairs, and he returned home after the UN General Assembly session of 1960 in which the Titans of the world participated and clashed, "exhausted in spirit". But he held on with faith to what he called his "calculated idealism" in world affairs though that was badly knocked on the head by uncontrollable events from time to time; his head, however, remained unbowed.

During this last phase of his life we find Nehru planting his feet more and more firmly in the Indian soil. In December 1958 he wrote that "the only way we can play an effective role (in world affairs) is by developing India." This was, of course, no new revelation for Nehru, but a conviction and an objective that ran through his whole life. But we find a new intensity and a deeper concentration on his part on basic issues of nation-building, his earlier audacious approach of rapid and large-scale industrialization and modernization of Indian economy remaining fundamentally intact, but mellowing and maturing into a deeper, broader appreciation of the need for developing, transforming and strengthening India at the grass roots.

Vincent Sheen had described Nehru as "a non-Gandhian Gandhian", "an evolutionary extension of Gandhi's genius", and "a transposition of Gandhi's ideas into a more spacious field." A certain quintessential spirit of Gandhi animated Nehru's approach be it to complicated world situations, particular conflicts with Pakistan and China, contentious issues of communalism an national integration, industrialisation, agricultural development, village panchayats or village schools. It is interesting that the new concentration on grass-roots issues coincided with the preparation and formulation of the Third Plan

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with its emphasis on basic industries as well as agriculture and the rural economy. After signing the Third Plan document Nehru wrote in his letter of August 5, 1961: "We felt a sense of exhilaration at a great work accomplished and a great journey well begun" adding however that "the real question is one of implementation."

The major document of this period which spelt out Nehru's credo was the "Basic Approach" of 1958 which he sent as an enclosure to one of his letters to the Chief Ministers and which was later published in the "AICC Economic Review". In this paper he set aside both Western economics which have "little bearing on our present day problems" and Marxist economics "which are in many ways out of date", and came to the conclusion that: "We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions." Essentially what he advocated was a mature, mellower version of the concept of mixed economy asserting that "in present day India it should encourage private enterprise in many fields, though even that private enterprise must necessarily fit in with the national plan. . .". He ended this historic note by saying "we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means; and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of everything that exists." Though Nehru did not work out his economic and social philosophy in any schematic manner he was one of those who wrestled with the basic issues of the time and searched for an Indian path that was not backward looking, but dynamic and progressive taking into account modern developments.

In one of his letters of March 26, 1958, Nehru wrote: "More and more I think less of the top structure and more of the bottom. I think the real change will come when the bottom layers start functioning with energy and vitality." "The basic foundation of our country," he said, "must be: the village panchayat, the village cooperative, and the village school." In advocating these grass-roots institutions, he was being the non-Gandhian Gandhian who conceived these institutions in the context of change, as institutions themselves undergoing change and serving an instruments of change in society. He wanted power to be given to panchayats, cooperatives to be small but linked to a large union of thousands of village cooperatives in order to take advantage of the benefits of bigness. He also experimented with service cooperatives and joint farming. Regarding schools he constantly talked about saving money on construction involved in "the brick and mortar" approach by building the smallest structures for village schools to keep some books and equipment, and giving holidays in the monsoon season. He wanted the money to be put into training teachers and providing them basic amenities. He admitted that he had not succeeded in convincing others on the matter saying in desperation "I go on crying in a wilderness of disbelief."

On agricultural development and food production Nehru showed almost a repetitive obsession in these letters. "Our whole future," he wrote "revolves around this question of food production." He advised the Chief Ministers to take charge of the Agricultural Departments or be Chairman of a Cabinet Committee on Agriculture. He exhorted that land reforms be implemented. Yet he and the Congress Party showed almost a paralysis of political will when it came to implementation of land reforms. This is a paralysis that has affected other parties also, indeed the entire Indian establishment. It is clear that only through land reforms can there be released social forces dynamic enough to vitalise our agrarian scene giving dynamism to such basic institutions as panchayats and cooperatives, and initiative and self-reliance to the farmers. In this respect it seems that the continuing Indian attempt is to make the socialist omelette, or even the developmental omelette without breaking feudal-capitalist eggs in agricultural sector. Nehru was also frustrated by the administrative set up and declared helplessly "we drift by some adverse fate towards more and more official control and bureaucracy."

Asked whether he suffered from internal conflict Nehru replied "A person without internal conflict is a lunatic".

❖

Nehru was not only concerned with the big and momentous issues of a world peace, China, Pakistan, Planning, agricultural development, industrial projects etc.. He had time to think and write about smaller but important problems of the people.

❖

A development that troubled Nehru in his last phase was the resurgence of communal riots and communalism. Today when there is a distemper in the mind of the majority community and the emergence of a new aggressiveness among them, it is relevant to recall Nehru's views on the subject. In his letter of March 26, he wrote about the position of the minority communities: "The real test about a minority community is not how we feel about it. If they are not satisfied, then we have to search for some remedy for their malaise." There are many in India who look upon this as appeasement. Nehru looked at this issue clearly: "We have also, let us be frank about it, communalism not only in the minority but very much so in the majority. The chief difference is that in the majority it puts on the garb of nationalism and democracy. But that is a false democracy." Throughout this over 600 pages of letters we find Nehru carrying on his crusade against communalism, casteism and other divisive forces in society, and for his cherished dream of national integration.

Nehru was not only concerned with the big and momentous issues of a world peace, China, Pakistan, Planning, agricultural development, industrial projects etc.. He had time to think and write about smaller but important problems of the people. Wastage of food in hotels, restaurants and wedding feasts, the humble brooms used by our cleaners and sweepers, better ploughs for the farmers, buiiding roads leaving room for future widening, usage of flags in Ministers cars and residence, reducing security personnel for VIP's to the minimum, all these and more attracted his attention and found place in his letters. Nehru emerges from these letters the thinking, sensitive human being that we have known, full of serious intent for building the nation and serving the people for whom he dedicated his life. Under the general editorship of Shri G. Parthasarathy these five volume of letters have been presented to the public in an attractive and highly readable form. This is an indispensable and very lively historical record for understanding not only the Nehru era but modern India. ❑

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MORAL PRINCIPLES IN TENSION

Syed Shahabuddin

SHARIAT AND AMBIGUITY IN ISLAM

Edited by Katherine P. Ewing

Oxford University Press, 1988, pp., Rs.250.00

The book under review is a valuable contribution towards understanding Islam as a living religion which guides the conduct and behaviour of approximately one-sixth of the people of the world today and which continues to expand, irrespective of the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, to new horizons.

The papers included in this volume were presented at the Conference on 'South Asian Islam: Moral Principles in Tension' held in Pennsylvania in May, 1981, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies' Joint Committee on South Asia. This Conference was a sequel to a Conference whose focus was the concept of 'Adab' (proper behaviour) as a way of exploring the core values of Islam. These papers focus on the tensions between the values and traditions and the processes adopted to resolve them.

The contributions are mostly American scholars of S.E. Asia with substantial academic credentials: Catherine B. Asher (Indo-Islamic architecture), Katherine P. Ewing (Sufism), Sandria B. Freitag (South Asian History with special reference to rise of communalism), Warren Fusfeld (Islamic Law), Stephen Pastner (Social Anthropology), Carol Prindle (Muslim Bengal) and Judy Pugh (Indo-Islamic medicine), apart from well-known scholars like David Gilmartin (Punjab Politics and Muslim Politics), Richard Kurin (Social Dynamics), David Lelyveld (Social History), Carrol Pastner (Social Organisation) and William Roff (Comparative Sociology).

Akbar Ahmad from Pakistan and Rafiuddin Ahmed from Bengladesh apart from Azam Nanji, a Ismaili scholar settled in the USA, provide the sub-continental contribution. It is indeed surprising that no Indian scholar, Muslim or non-Muslim, finds a place. Perhaps this was an inadvertent omission.

Most of the contributors are anthropologists followed by historians. The preponderance of anthropologists suggests a deeper quest—not just description of historic developments but an explanation of the whys and wherefores of history through an understanding of social tensions and the deeper underlying processes to resolve them which ultimately make history. But the anthropological approach also has its limitations. When one culture observes another, there is an inevitable air of superiority. The insider may well feel like an animal in a zoo whose behaviour is under study.

In many ways the most informative and penetrating paper in this collection is the Introduction by Katherine Ewing whose title is 'Ambiguity and Shariat—A Perspective on the Problem of Moral Principles in Tension'. Dr. Ewing has summed up the theme of the essays as the *relationship between codes of behaviour derived from Islamic principles and codes derived from other sources and the central issues addressed by the scholars as the uses of ambiguity, the tendency to define boundaries when under stress, and the role of ordinary people in defining appropriate codes of behaviour.*

The other key papers are David Gilmartin's "Customary Law and Shariat in British Punjab", David Lelyveld's "Eloquence and Authority in Urdu: Poetry, Oratory and Film", Rafiuddin Ahmad's "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment", Warren Fusfeld's "Boundaries of Islam and Infidelity" and Richard Kurim's "Culture of Ethnicity in Pakistan", each of which covers a wide enough field in time and space (not just episodes) and leads the reader to conclusions and insights which can help him understand the development of Muslim societies as distinct from Islamic Societies. In many ways these essays raise universal contemporary issues when the Islamic world is passing through a period of rapid transition under the impact of political, economic and cultural changes brought out by the emergence of scores of 'Muslim' states as the colonial tide recedes, the growing interdependence of world economy and the interpenetration of cultures in a world fast shrinking into a global village. In the relation of Muslim States with each other and with non-Muslim States, in the coexistence of Muslim communities and non-Muslim communities within the boundaries of a common State, in the ethnic and denominational plurality of Muslim States themselves, in the social life of each Muslim community and in the private life of each believer, there are grey zones—areas of ambiguity—which sometimes create stresses and strains but which are incapable of a 'final' resolution and which can split the community, if the argument on contradiction and inconsistency is carried to its logical conclusions. But solidarity and survival demand peaceful coexistence, and acceptance of deviations, accretions and innovations, up to a point. This implies a dynamic view of the Shariat and not a static view as a body of fossilised ground-rules, once laid down and valid for everyone and everywhere.

Ambiguity—A Universal Mechanism

Ambiguity is the mechanism all human societies use to fill the gap between precept and practice, between the ideal and the actual. Indeed no social institution can function without making an allowance for contradictions and inconsistencies. Life cannot be lived according to the rule book. Logic has to compromise with reality; law with prudence; there is always a grey zone and the security of the society sometimes depends on not attempting to reduce it to an Euclidean line. Ambiguity is, therefore, a universal phenomenon and a well-tried technique for managing society as a functional entity, as an operational unit, as a working system.

Ambiguity can be exemplified in personal as well as social situations and particularly in inter-social interaction, when one culture interacts with another. In a situation of challenge and response both begin from confrontation and then move from conflict to cooperation and settle down in uneasy coexistence—sometimes peaceful, sometimes hostile—but the compulsion to find an equilibrium is always there. Unless there is total incompatibility and the struggle leads to liquidation or extinction or domination, generally the end result is understanding, mutual appreciation, a synthesis, a tendency to avoid irreconcilable situations or embarrassing questions, a desire to paper over differences, to rationalise, to find a new meaning.

This is precisely what has happened in the encounter between Islam and South Asia. Islam as an idea, as a faith, as a way of life, came from outside. But already it had lost its purity. Islam had been adopted by the Persians and the Central Asians, giving rise to their own variants with their own specificities and particularities superimposed on the essential doctrines. Secondly, the sub-continent and the South-east Asian peninsula were not virgin territories. They had their own history, cultural structures, social ethos, economic systems. Even when a section of the people embraced Islam, the old order remained intact. Politically the society may have been overwhelmed or subordinated but culturally the local way of life retained its legitimacy in the eyes of the native people—Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The grip of traditions and customs could not be altogether loosened even with the magnetic attraction exerted by the new power-structure, even if it so desired, as it rarely did, to play a messianic role.

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So, Islamic culture brought by the outsiders had to come to terms with the local culture at two levels, in the everyday life of the new converts to give rise to a new folk culture and in the dealings between the new power structure and the people which had to speak to each other, sometimes evolve a new idiom, set up a system of exchange of goods and services, establish a dialogue at the intellectual level, understand each others' purposes and motives and slowly but imperceptibly learn from each other, changing both the giver and the taker in the process, the conquered and the conquerors of the battlefield exchanging roles repeatedly in the long drawn-out market of ideas!

Inevitably some communities which formally embraced Islam remained socially and culturally more or less what they were. One therefore notices a process of progressive Islamisation which moves by fits and starts, at different speeds depending on the terrain, the resistance at the ground level and the power of the prime movers. One also observes the evolution of a composite culture—expressing itself in music and literature, in arts and architecture, in social etiquette and vocabulary, in new forms of 'adab'. But what is important is that this creative evolution has social acceptance as a common heritage, evokes a sense of pride (till in a new era, old wounds are opened and old accounts are sought to be sorted out). The finest examples of the synthesis in the sub-continent are the Urdu literature, the Taj Mahal, the Mughal miniatures and Hindustani music.

The questions that the book raises relate to the response of the custodians and exponents of the Shariat and of the elite to this evolving situation. There is no doubt that at a given moment in time and space, the social and cultural situation must have appeared deplorable to the theologian. From time to time he raised his voice; his anger—impotent as it was in stopping a historic process—generated some heat; he fell silent out of fatigue and accepted life as it was being lived as the manifestation of Divine Will. At times he caught the eyes of the temporal authority—the sultan or some nobles who shared the theologians' sense of loss and dismay at the Muslims transgressing the Shariat in ordering their personal life and social affairs and who had at times his own axe to grind, to play the game of one-upmanship against another ruler or another coterie to generate sympathy and mobilise support in internecine struggles to legitimise his acquisition of power or wealth or status. Most of the time, till we enter the age of democracy, no one really bothered how 'Islamically' the masses lived; the elite, the upper classes, the nobility set the tone, laid the standards and by and large they lived in two worlds. They generally professed Islam and paid tribute to it as the regulator of their lives and yet lived a largely unIslamic life. The Ulema of the establish ignored their 'private' transgressions; rationalised inevitable and inescapable innovations or deviations; sometimes made a fuss. But they were very forgiving, very understanding; they could be mollified at little cost! A fatwa, a new interpretation, a new formula and the aroused conscience could be put to sleep. The cleavage was rarely permitted to develop into a fissure which would threaten the super-structure, Islam and all. Instinct of survival was stronger than the tendency to raise inconvenient questions.

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What is needed is a wider debate involving the insider and the outsider, theologian as well as the historian, the jurist as well as the anthropologist, the sociologist and the psychologist, to understand the course of evolution of Muslim societies and propagation of Islam.

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Ethnic Differentiation in Islam

Islam is not mono-lingual or mono-cultural. Essentially a body of religious doctrines, it has shown the innate capacity to make an adjustment with the language and culture of diverse peoples from the Negro to the Mongol, focussing on *eliminating religious practices as well as social customs which were antithetical to its basic doctrines of Tawheed and which ran counter to a positive injunction of the Quran and the Traditions,* which form the foundation of the Shariat. Otherwise, the people continued to live their lives as they did. This is how in each cultural environment, Islam developed a new balance, an appropriate temper and a local complexion, resulting in cultural and ethnic differentiation. While sharing a basic code of religious beliefs and practices, Arab Islam, Persian Islam, Indian Islam, Malay Islam, Negro Islam are therefore culturally distinct from each other. And even within each geographic-cultural zone, it is easy to discern a gradual change of form and tone say, as one travels from the Euphrates to the Nile or as one proceeds from Peshawar to Dhaka. *What needs to be emphasised is that this ethnic differentiation is the natural order, the logical growth and not a deviation from or, in any sense, a degradation of Islam.* This is not easy to comprehend unless one understands that the Quran was not revealed as a textbook of law or as an act of legislature, that the Quran contains only relatively few positive injunctions which a Muslim is obliged to follow and for the rest leaves him free to follow the path of his choice according to his conscience. The Quran thus includes some constants but many variables, Secondly, the Holy Prophet could not possibly forsee all the questions that arose as Islam expanded beyond Arabia into the homelands of other civilizations and cultures. In fact in the life-time of the Holy Prophet himself arose questions whose direct and absolute answers could not be found in the Quran and the Prophet advised them to follow his practice (Sunna) and when that failed to provide guidance, to apply one's mind and appeal to reason. This is the origin of 'Ijtihad' based on reason.

Shariat: Dynamic Not Static

Every society develops its own sense of propriety, of reasonableness; one may call it 'custom' or 'Adab' but the Quran encompasses it all in the phrase 'Maaroof'—the well-known or the well-accepted. Thus Islam has an inbuilt device of resolving the contradictions or reducing the grey zones of ambiguity. This also explains why there cannot be an ideal model of Islamisation and why such efforts have repeatedly failed in the modern time.

On the other hand, let it be emphasised, Islam is unambiguous, uncompromising and clear in matters of doctrine. Based on revealed scripture, like other Semitic religions, Islam draws a clear boundary. But while a 'Farz' is ordained and a 'Haram' is prohibited, there are three other degrees of permissibility between these extremes. Shariat, is therefore, to be understood not as a static body of inflexible rules of behaviour, public and private, drawn up at a particular point in time and space and frozen for ever and for all places. It should be seen as dynamic which, within the limits set by the absolutes and the constants, permits, through Ijtihad and Qayas (reinterpretation and reason), the evolution of every society and culture according to its genius, finds solutions to new problems as they arise and allows for flexibility within limits.

To the reviewer what is important is not the extent of observance of the Shariat by a given Muslim community, as viewed by an outsider, but how 'Islamic' the said Muslim community appears to be in its own eyes; whether it professes the basic tenets of the faith and whether it looks upon itself as 'Muslim' and has the readiness to divest itself of practices which go against the Quranic injunctions.

Life is adjustment, accommodation and evolution. Ambiguity has its uses and logic has its limits.

As a chronicle of micro-examples of deviation from Islamic norms as well as case histories of exploitation of Islam for political purposes, some of these studies make an valuable contribution in diverse fields, but most of the papers are largely descriptive and not analytical and do not address the problem from a theoretical standpoint or from the point of view of the insider. From this angle, Rafiuddin Ahmad's paper on "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problem of Change and Adjustment" and Warren Fusfeld's "The Boundaries of Islam and Infidelity" are very valuable. What is needed is a wider debate involving the insider and the outsider, theologian as well as the historian, the jurist as well as the anthropologist, the sociologist and the psychologist, to understand the course of evolution of Muslim societies and propagation of Islam. ❑

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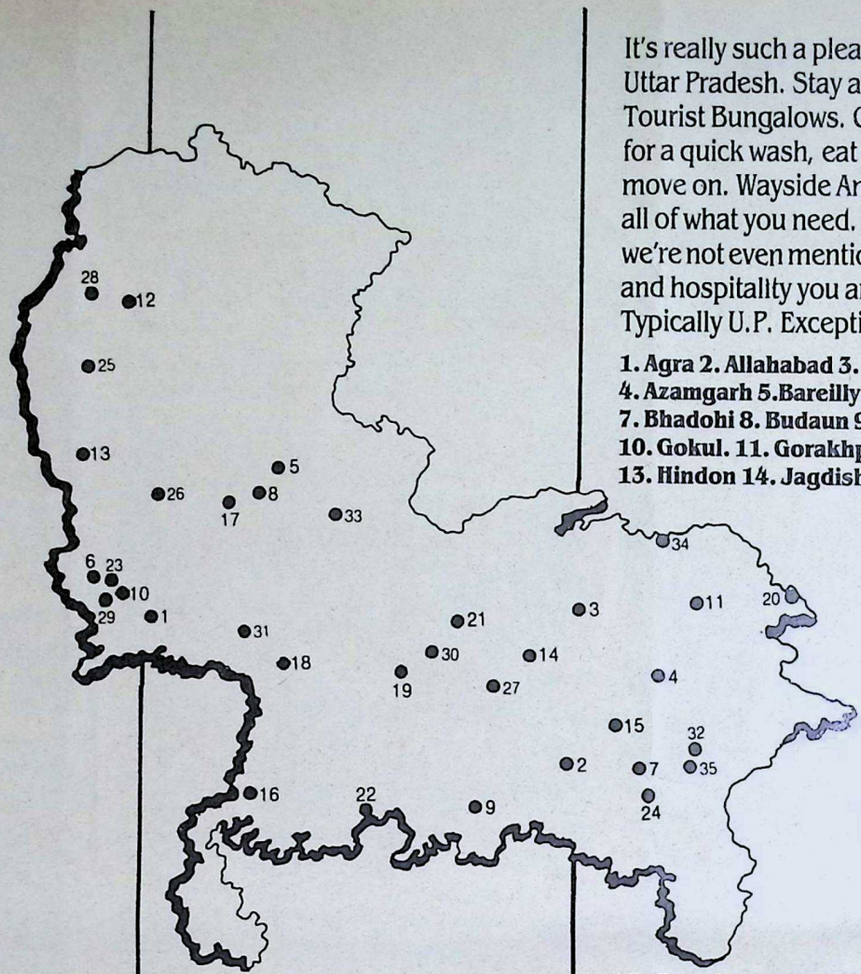

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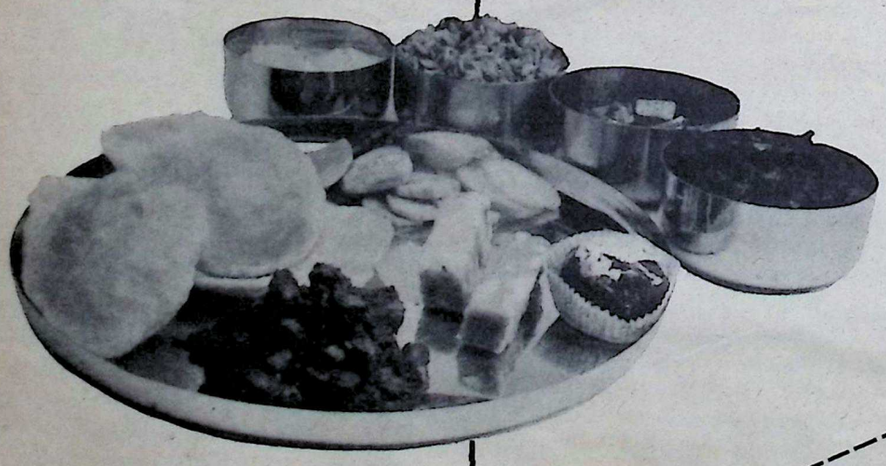

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INDIAN FOREIGN/DEFENCE POLICIES—VIGNETTES

P.R. Chari

ETHNICITY AND
NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

By Urmila Phadnis

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 238, Rs. 225.00

YEARBOOK ON INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, 1989

Edited by Satish Kumar

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990. pp. 262, Rs. 295.00

INDIA PAKISTAN CHINA: DEFENCE
AND NUCLEAR TANGLE IN SOUTH ASIA

By R.R. Subramanian

ABC Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989, pp. viii+165, Rs. 150.00

It would be platitudinous to reiterate that the international system is in high flux. Therefore, presentiments of global instability having a deleterious effect on national security are but natural. Witness the radical changes taking place in the Soviet Union and East Europe leading to anxieties regarding the unravelling of the Eastern bloc which could, simultaneously, unravel NATO if the reunification of the Germanies comes about. Fortunately, detente and peace inform the prevailing *zeitgeist*, strengthened by a de-ideologisation, democratisation and increasing permeability of world polity. Superpower entente has encouraged the negotiation of arms control agreements and Sino–Soviet relations to be channelised into more hopeful directions, regional conflicts in different areas of tension to subside, and the U.N. system to regain some of its lost *elan*. Economic relations, moreover, are gaining salience over the strategic and political interactions between nations. The international system is witnessing the rise of new actors deriving their strength from economic power like Japan, West Germany, and the East Asian tigers, with the prospect of a united Europe hovering on the horizon. Within the United States, political power has shifted to the West coast in appreciation of its techno-economic development and growing links with the new epicentres of economic power on the Pacific rimland.

The sum and effect of all these developments would be to accelerate the obtaining mutipolarity and diffusion of power in the international system. Nations like India would need to redefine their role perception in this changing regional and international milieu. Its security policies would also need to be evolved within this dynamic global environment taking account of the admixed nature of its external and internal security threats. Indeed, the internal threats to national security and efforts by external forces to manipulate them might gain ascendancy in the future. It needs but slight reflection to concede that South Asia offers a perfect model to observe all these phenomena, and the three books under review address different facets of these problems in the sub-continental situation.

Ms. Phadnis's study *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia* seeks to interpret the challenges posed by ethnic factors to national integrity in this region, which exhibits vast ethnic diversities that often spill over territorial frontiers, portending both synthesis and conflict in the area. A definitional problem immediately arises in describing such evocative terms as 'ethnicity' and 'nation' without delimiting their meaning and usage too rigorously. The author suggests that apart from providing quality and character to the group, ethnicity 'is the summation of its impulses and motivations for power and recognition. It is determined by a complex interaction of social forces. These include, most typically, a common homeland, homogeneity in race, language and religion, apart from cultural and historical linkages. The concept is necessarily fluid, since all social groups have horizontal and vertical cleavages and agglomeration can be manipulated or managed by power elites.

The other term 'nation' has been recognized as signifying a psycho-cultural entity, as distinct from the politico-legal word 'state.' An ideal, non-conflictual situation would result if 'nation' and 'state' became synonymous, but the obtaining reality is a situation of multi-ethnicity within the South Asian countries, Further, the post-colonial territorial borders obtaining in South Asia are porous to the cross-currents of ethnic movements, which often leads to intra-regional dissonance. Caste and a moral code prescribing a stratified hierarchical structure were the pre-colonial heritage of all these countries. The colonial experience only succeeded in distorting these socio-economic phenomena in the polity. These, and other discontinuities, are often exploited by power elites to insulate themselves from internal and external challenges using the familiar exhortations of 'nation in danger', 'foreign hand' and so on. The symbology of national flags, national emblems and national anthems are also harnessed to emphasize a sense of nationhood and foster national unity. Ethnic identity, however, is sustained by cultural uniformities founded on myths, value systems and so on, deriving from a shared civilisational experience. The potential for inter-group conflicts, therefore, is greatest when these cleavages, arising from multi-ethnicity and cultural plurality are wide, or cultural symbols—typically language or religion or caste—are manipulated by ethnic group leaders.

These propositions need to be appreciated against the backdrop of certain general developments in South Asian polity viz. the expansion of State power, growing centralisation of state authority and increasing homogenisation of the nation. These developments are no doubt reflective of the progress in modern technology which serves to knit national structures into closer administrative units. Coming specifically to the ethnic problems faced by India during the eighties, the author notes the serious dangers to national unity from communal tensions, but also the resilience of India's federal polity to contain such conflict. By contrast, Pakistan has a vertically balanced power structure, resting on the narrow base of a dominant ethnic group, with no linkages to any horizontal structures. The moral: ". . . structural arrangements like federalism can minimise ethnic tensions by universalising the principles of power devolution and thereby devolving conflict at (sic) a lower level."

Ethnic movements have their origin in a large number of socio-economic causes ranging from erosion of traditional political structures due to the pressures of beliefs like democracy, equality and distributive justice, to the influence of Western concepts like urbanisation, industrialisation and consumersim, to increasing intervention by the State—heightening the contradictions between the principles of unitarianism and federalism. The author differentiates ethnic movements by their objectives i.e. systemic or seeking socio-political change within the existing framework e.g.. Chakma demands within the Chittagong Hill Tracts; anti-systemic or desiring structural change for ceding their demands e.g. Baluch/Pathan/Sindhi desires for greater autonomy; and, secessionist or irreden-

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tist e.g. demand for Tamil Eelam. These objectives could, obviously, change over time e.g. Mizo movement converting from a secessionist to an autonomist movement. This method of differentiating ethnic movements by objectives is valid, although it is also useful to classify them by causes, according as they have their roots in motives that are plainly ethno-political or socio-economic or religio-communal.

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The overall conclusions reached by Ms. Phadnis are that imbuing prevalent discontent with an ethnic colouration in South Asia carries the latent danger of triggering inter-State and intra-State conflict, especially when the State apparatus relies heavily on military force, rather than explore political means to diffuse ethnic strife.

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The containment of ethnic movements requires an erosion of the sense of ethnic particularism and creation of the rubric of national unity by a process of gradual social change. Accommodation of ethnic demands is possible by effecting changes in the governing structure e.g. territorial decentralisation, as by conceding Statehood, or by devolution or administrative and financial powers. A distributive approach to ethnic demands is also possible by, most prominently, altering the scope of reservation policies, by which particular groups are either included or excluded from their ambit, ostensibly to reduce inter-ethnic disparities. The spread of technology and information by the process of socio-economic development, however, permits ethnic dissatisfactions to be manipulated and mobilised by local elites into powerful anti-systemic or secessionist movements: they can also be exacerbated by external actors providing moral and material support. The author has illustrated the external dimensions of ethnic separatism by analysing the developments culminating in the birth of Bangladesh, Tamil movement in Sri Lanka, Baluch irredentism, the various insurgencies in Northeast India and the Khalistan movement. The general pattern that emerges in South Asia is that, despite pious genuflections made in the direction of the inviobility of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, there is little inhibition in external actors getting involved to pursue their strategic objectives. *Real-politik* is the guiding principle in their encouraging these low-cost operations, although the compulsions of transnational ethnic linkages are also there.

The overall conclusions reached by Ms. Phadnis are that imbuing prevalent discontent with an ethnic colouration in South Asia carries the latent danger of triggering inter-State and intra-State conflict, especially when the State apparatus relies heavily on military force, rather than explore political means to diffuse ethnic strife. Mass politics in South Asia is becoming increasingly ethnic in character, with the leadership preferring to manipulate ethnic politics, rather than display the statesmanship required to resolve such issues. These trends are inimical to the evolution of a composite secular and cultural mosaic and to the task of nation-building in South Asia. These are pessimistic conclusions. The obtaining realities, however, discourage any greater optimism in this regard.

Some inadequacies in this thesis might now be noticed. We believe that a sharper recognition of what precisely constitutes ethnicity needs to be sought to discover the psycho-cultural contours of this term. An aggregation of all forms of sub-national particularism may describe ethnicity in an encyclopaedic form, but this is too inchoate to be satisfactory for analytical purposes. The importance of geography in its strategic dimensions, too, would not seem to have been sufficiently appreciated: to exemplify, the ethnic problems in Northeast India derive largely from, and are exacerbated by, the peripheral location of the region within India and adjoining parts of Burma and Bangladesh where the writ of their central government hardly runs. Then again the author could have further pursued her logic and noticed how the cooptation of ethnic leadership into the power elite, as vividly demonstrated in Mizoram, Tripura and Darjeeling, has become the preferred route to the containment of autonomy/secessionist movement.

These shortcomings apart, there is no question regarding the significance of this major study. Indeed, the growing importance of ethnic factors in politics and conflict, most dramatically visible now in the Soviet Union, only highlights the timeliness of this study. With becoming modesty Ms. Phadnis claims in the preface that this is "an exploratory work", and hopes that "it would provoke others to delve deeper into the dynamics of ethnicity and nation-building". Some directions for further research in this area might be suggested as, for instance, the process whereby political/military elites guiding ethnic movements have been incorporated within local/regional power structures, particularist trends and differences within ethnic/insurgent movements as apparent in the Baluch and Tamil seperatisms, descriptive accounts of the political and military responses by the State to ethnic dissidence, interface between ethnic revolt and external intervention and narco-terrorism, besides comparative studies on ethnic diversities in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia including the Soviet Union. For those choosing to travel on these academic pathways this study would very adequately serve as the starting point.

Edited by Satish Kumar the *Yearbook of India's Foreign Policy* has become an enduring annual publication over the years. The present volume—sixth in the series—covers the calendar year 1988, and has four parts viz. a review of India's foreign policy during the year; essays on specific countries central to India's foreign policy; a country profile on Bhutan; and, a statistical and documentation section.

The first part containing the review of India's foreign policy during the year is divided into a brief overview of significant international events and a more detailed survey of India's relations with various countries in different regions of the world. One wishes the overview had taken account of India's economic diplomacy in U.N. and other fora to address the inadequacies of the international financial and monetary systems. The detailed survey, however, offers a useful synopsis of India's bilateral relations during the year that would be of interest to students of Indian foreign policy. The last part of this Yearbook sets out a useful set of statistical data on India's direction of trade, foreign debt, external aid and so on. Similarly, the documentation section reproduces major speeches made by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, press communiques issued and international agreements signed during the year.

Among the essays Arun Kumar Banerji's "India-Pakistan Relations: The Game of One-Upmanship" presents a sound analysis of the causes underlying tensions between the two countries. These include basic distrust, divergence in security perceptions, negative images, compulsions of domestic politics and, finally, one-upmanship, which needs to be abandoned if India and Pakistan "are to live as good, not distant, neighbours".

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The Yearbook of India's Foreign Policy *has become an enduring annual publication over the years. The present volume—sixth in the series—covers the calendar year 1988, and has four parts viz. a review of India's foreign policy during the year; essays on specific countries central to India's foreign policy; a country profile on Bhutan; and, a statistical and documentation section.*

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Lieutenant General Vohra's contribution on "Indian Peace Keeping in Sri Lanka" offers a sympathetic account of India's involvement in the Sri Lankan imbroglio and the IPKF's role therein. He is at pains to refute the criticism that the IPKF was unable to produce a military solution, because all

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it could possibly have achieved was the creation of "an environment in which political solution can be arrived at and implemented". He believes, however, that in the circumstance then prevailing in the Jaffna peninsula India's intervention could not have been avoided.

Ms. Karki Hussain has a major piece on "India's China Policy: Putting Politics in Command", in which she undertakes a broad survey of Sino-Indian relations before focussing on major irritants like the border dispute between the two countries, Sumdorong Chu incident, India's grant of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh and the Chequer Board military exercise. She is clear that only a "give and take approach" by India would succeed in resolving the border dispute which serves further to underline "the futility of demanding unilateral concessions from China". About India's claims to the Aksaichin plateau, she cites the late K.P.S. Menon with approval stating that:"...even the geographic principle of watershed heavily relied on by India in the eastern and the middle sector was not in its favour in the west". Future relations between India and China hold out guarded hope, provided the Joint Working Group, established after Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China, negotiates a mutually acceptable solution to the vexed border dispute problem.

In a brief review,"India's Disarmament Initiatives" Rikhi Jaipal outlines the disarmament proposals made during the Rajiv era. He notes perceptively that India has shifted its emphasis to highlighting the dangers from harnessing new scientific and technological developments for military purposes, and the imminent militarisation of space. This is apparent from the declarations made within the six-nation five-continent initiative, Delhi Declaration, and the Action Plan submitted to the U.N. Third Special Session on Disarmament.

There are other essays on Kampuchea, Afghanistan, developments in the Soviet Union, and India's relations with Japan, West Germany and the United States which considerations of space do not permit us to describe here.

The country profile on Bhutan by B.S. Das is of especial value in this volume, combining the writer's personal knowledge of that country with the erudition of sound scholarship. Recognizing Bhutan's intrinsic policies to be concerned with internal consolidation, gradual expansion of external relations, and active involvement with non-controversial regional and international agencies, the author draws attention both to Bhutan's overwhelming dependence on India and its calibrated efforts to enlarge the area of its independence. The King retains absolute powers in his person, but prefers to govern through a system of consultations and consensus. The question accosting Bhutan's future is whether the acceleration of socio-economic developments can be progressed, whilst keeping the political superstructure unchanged.

R.R. Subramanian's *India Pakistan China: Defence and Nuclear Tangle in South Asia* draws attention initially to the confusions underlying U.S. non-proliferation policies, wherein its concerns with additions to the Nuclear Club has been subordinated to American strategic interests. This permissiveness towards Pakistan's relentless nuclear quest has been noticed by Gerard C. Smith and Helena Cobban in their recent article in *Foreign Affairs* suggestively entitled "A Blind Eye to Nuclear Proliferation". They suggest that U.S. complacency towards Pakistan's and Israel's nuclear status derives from confidence that the U.S. can live with the state of nuclear ambiguity established by these countries, and relief that the scary proliferation scenarios sketched out in the seventies after India's nuclear test have not yet emerged. Subramanian proceeds to describe nuclear developments in Pakistan and China, and their current nuclear postures.

He highlights the unambiguous technological thrust of the Pakistani nuclear programme towards developing both the uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing routes to the bomb, and Pakistan's ultimate goal of reaching thermo-nuclear and IRBM capabilities. China has traditionally relied on nuclear weapons on the grounds that they permit 'self reliance' in defence: it has now discovered the additional logic that a defence predicated on conventional weapons would needlessly require dependence on imported Western technology. As part of its arms-export linked foreign policy China is also attempting an 'imperial overstretch' into South Asia and the Gulf region.

❖

On the prescriptive side the author believes that a minimum deterrent posture against Pakistan is possible by India deploying short-range missiles. A deterrent posture against China would need to be premised on IRBMs and submarine launched missiles, and expenditure thereon would have to be in addition to present defence outlays.

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Subramanian contrasts Pakistan's and China's clarity in nuclear matters with the vacillations of India's nuclear policies in the passages:

> It has become customary for Indians to wallow in nuclear disarmament rhetoric, even as it wants to retain the nuclear weapons option, but for very localised contingencies

or, again,

> . . . she [India] waxes and wanes about the threat from Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. Yet, she says nothing about the Chinese missiles that are stationed in inner Tibet. . . .

India has displayed its capability to explode a nuclear device in May 1974, launch surface-to-surface rockets like *Prithvi* and *Agni* that can be converted into short-range and intermediate-range nuclear missiles respectively, and has leased a nuclear powered submarine from the Soviet Union. The absence of a coherent nuclear doctrine, however, is only too apparent.

On the prescriptive side the author believes that a minimum deterrent posture against Pakistan is possible by India deploying short-range missiles. A deterrent posture against China would need to be premised on IRBMs and submarine launched missiles, and expenditure thereon would have to be in addition to present defence outlays. India could thereafter link reductions in its nuclear arms to global disarmament efforts. The author also believes that a mutual inspection and verification regime between India and Pakistan would not be viable as diversion of weapons grade fissile materials from nuclear installations would always be possible by falsification of accounts and various available technical means.

It would be difficult to agree with Subramanian's thesis, that India should further clarify its nuclear policy. That policy already envisages that India would remain wedded to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and would not be deflected from that course unless extraneous developments supervene. In other words, and with especial reference to the Indo-Pak context, India would remain below the nuclear threshold so long as Pakistan does not cross it. Meanwhile, India's atomic, space, missile and naval programmes would proceed on a broad technological front that has an obvious non-military content.

Subramanian has not discussed the alternatives to exercising the nuclear option. He could, for instance, have considered the possibilities of India and Pakistan synthesizing a regional peace that would obviate the two countries seeking a nuclear option, and the likelihood of the United States and the Soviet Union being able to constrain the regional adversaries from going nuclear. Reading this book has been made difficult by the fact that the matter is not properly organised. There is also a great deal of repetition of facts and no proper historical sequencing of events.

The ethnic dimensions in South Asian polity, India's bilateral ties with important regional and international actors, and the nuclear overhang over Sino-Indian and Sino-Pak relations are of seminal interest to students and practitioners of Indian foreign policy. The task before them is to discover the linkages between these aspects and others of relevance to the construct of Indian foreign policy, and to weave them together into a valid framework that could reveal the challenges to India in the nineties. ❑

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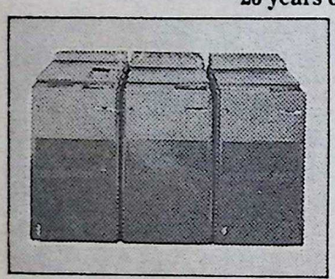

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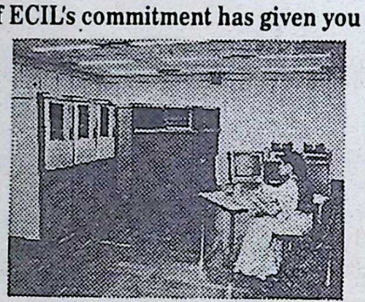

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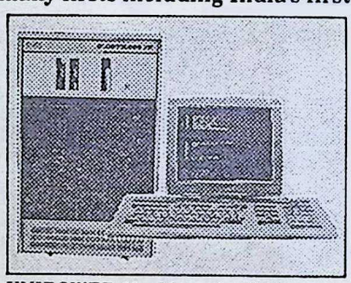

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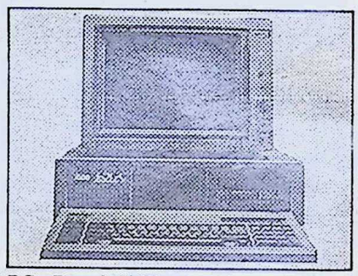

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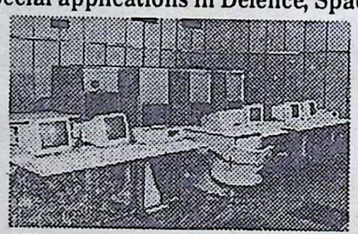

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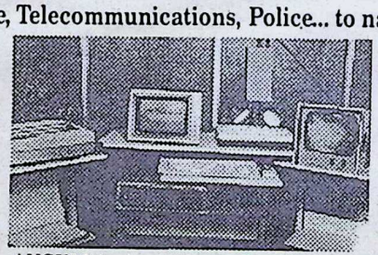

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From My Book Bag

Keshav Desiraju

Making a selection from among the books one has read in the last year (and also published in the last year, I think the Editor said, though I trust she will permit exceptions) was not quite as difficult as it could have been. Recent reading has not really been very extended, but much of it has been with pleasure and profit. The list must surely start with Ramachandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* (O.U.P., 1989, pp.214, Rs. 175.00) sub-titled 'Ecological change and Peasant resistance in the Himalaya'. It is not often that non-fiction is so immediately readable. Dr. Guha's scholarly analysis links peasant movements invariably with attempts by the State to interface with traditional management of the forest, whether by way of reservation of forests, or the growth of commercial felling. Dr. Guha makes extensive use of State Archives as of the records of the Tehri-Garhwal Darbar to document traditional and modern forms of protest, dealing at the end with the Chipko phenomenon. This particular movement is not yet twenty years old, but myths have grown around it, not least because of the diligent efforts of several of the parties concerned. We should be grateful to Dr. Guha for his careful separation of fact from fairy tales. (This is in sharp contrast to at least one other recent publication on Chipko, Thomas Weber's *Hugging the Trees*). Interestingly, Dr. Guha suggests that the demand for a separate state of Uttarakhand is but a natural successor to the 'dhandaks' of old. This is, of course, open to discussion for many would say that Uttarakhand is presently only a movement in search of a leader. Even so, Dr. Guha's book is a splendid reading experience and ought to be read by all foresters and others living and working in the hills.

Sarvapalli Gopal's *Radhakrishnan* (OUP 1989, pp.408 Rs. 250.00) has not yet received the critical attention it deserves.* Perhaps this will only follow its publication abroad, for in many ways Dr. Gopal writes for the Western sensibility. This is not really as ironic as it sounds for even Radhakrishnan's genius, for all that it was rooted in India and Indian thought, first reached flowering only when he was addressing the West. His work in comparative religion and on world fellowship, which was to become a major concern, grew out of his dialogue with the liberal Western mind. The popular press has been enthusiastic enough about the biography but serious comment is still to come. It would be a pity if it did not, for Dr. Gopal writes exquisite prose and his study of his distinguished parent is a model of restraint without reticence, and appreciation without extravagance. Several reviewers have quoted at length from the book in their reviews. My own favourite lines are Dr. Gopal's epitaph on his mother:

It has been asked recently about three wives of great men whether, given a second chance they would have married the same husbands. In Sivakamu's case there is no doubt about the answer. Being the wife of the greatest creative intellect of his generation had not been easy; but she would not have had her lot cast otherwise.

A lesser work, but also in the biographical mode is Peter Heehs' *Sri Aurobindo* (OUP, pp. 172, Rs. 65.00) No claims are made by either author or publisher and we are told that the author is working on 'a multi volume scholarly biography of Sri Aurobindo'. However, this little book makes generally easy and educative reading, which is more than can be said about much that is written about our spiritual leaders and mystics. What is appealing about Mr. Heehs' book is a complete absence of incense and humbug. There is a workman like presentation of the facts before and after 1910, when Sri Aurobindo reached Pondicherry and gave up the revolutionary life for the mystic. Obviously the second half is far more difficult than the first. The spare elegance of Sri Aurobindo's own remark (in translation) that 'The only result of the wrath of the British Government was that I found God', is hard to recreate. Mr. Heehs does try to explain the working of an extraordinarily brilliant mind capable of great concentration and conceptualisation, and often in Sri Aurobindo's own words, but it is not always clear (one could say the same thing about Pupul Jayakar's *Krish-*

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From My Book Bag

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namurti). What, for instance, does the uninitiated make of a sentence such as: "As Sri Aurobindo rose towards 'supermind' he became aware that between it and lower levels there was an intermediate plane of 'superconscient cosmic mind' to which he gave the name 'overmind'." I am of course, quoting out of context, but the difficulty remains. There was obviously something fantastically different about the great Masters that set them apart from the majority, that forced them beyond and above the circumstances of their birth and which in turn generated enormous mental activity. But the what and how and why behind this difference eludes us. One could also ask whether there is any purpose in studying the writings of the Masters or in worshipping their relics, if one's own mind is cast in the normal mould? Difficult questions, and beyond the scope of this review, but questions prompted by Peter Heehs' book, which merits wide readership.

Biography again, but of an unusual variety is Barbara Caine's *Destined to be wives*, subtitled 'The Sisters of Beatrice Webb' (OUP Paperback 1988, pp.276, £5.95). The nine daughters of Richard and Lawrencina Potter (the only son died in infancy) lived over the period 1845–1949, when Victoria was Queen Empress, and men ran the world. The Potter sisters were, apart from Beatrice, not in any way distinguished, nor even really educated, but ink ran in their veins and all the joys and sorrows of their limited lives were expressed in diaries and letters. Barbara Caine draws extensively on these and creates a spirited account of a sisterhood, that despite tensions, lasted over the years providing the Potter women with the only absolute security in a world marked by a denial of opportunity. Not even their daughters, leave alone their sons, gave them the unquestioning support they got from each other. Barbara Caine's book shows just how much can result from careful research and how the single threads of individual lives go to make up the fabric of social history.

Lake Wobegon Days by Garrison Keillor (Faber and Faber Paperback, 1987, pp.337, Rs. 55.00) is modern American humour at its best. It does not suffice to merely say that it is about early Norwegian settlers in Minnesota. How does one describe a book that is not just funny, but is subtly, unobtrusively, excruciatingly funny? Garrison Keillor has an eye for all that is absurd and pathetic and inevitable about growing up in a small town and he writes easy, readable prose. Certainly to be read.

It is often the case that an article of this type ends with something fashionably obscure. But this description does less than justice to Herman Charles Bosman's *Unto Dust* (Human and Rousseau, second edition, 1983, pp.152) This collection of short-stories from South Africa demands a wider readership than presently available for books published in that country. Bosman wrote about the Transvaal and a few stories are translated from the Afrikaans. Some of them are very short, but all are taut, finely crafted pieces. Bosman relies on the short story writer's stock-in-trade, the surprise ending, but he knows and understands his craft. There are no words wasted, no padding, only wry pronouncements on human nature and human folly. Recommended reading and would people in the book business do something about it? ❑

**The Book Review* carried a full-length review of this book by Gopal Gandhi in the May/June-July/August issue (Vol. XIV, Nos. 3 & 4).

Of Books Read and Remembered

Shashi Tharoor

As it happens, I read more books by Indian authors in 1989 than I have usually managed to in previous years, so that my list of the most memorable volumes I have read during the year has a distinctive *swadeshi* look. This is, of course, increasingly unsurprising: Indian writing has attained a profusion and a proficiency that gives it an obvious claim to the attention of any Indian reader.

The most satisfying book I read in 1989 was Allan Sealy's *Trotter–Nama*, a witty, superbly-confident saga of Anglo-India which manages to combine a keen eye for detail with an inspiring sense of the sweep of history. Sealy writes with panache, interfusing his eventful narrative with delightful digressions into everything from the art of ballooning to choice recipes from Anglo-Indiana. Every episode and character of consequence from the Eurasian experience in the subcontinent is recaptured in the stories of the Trotter family, whose vividly-imagined members leave their erratic footprint on the sands of Indian history. The writing is original and often extremely funny, valuable qualities in a literary canon that is still somewhat overburdened with seriousness. A great read.

Excellent in a wholly different manner was Amitava Ghosh's, *The Shadow Lines*, a perfectly-constructed work that sets the seal on the author's undoubted accomplishment. The story is simple, yet unfolds in a manner that prompts admiration and engagement from the entranced reader. Ghosh writes with remarkable control: not a word is ill-chosen, not an idea unrealized, not a smile out of place. Every nuance is carefully explored by a writer who not only has something to say, but has mastered the craft of saying it better than most. Unlike *The Circle of Reason*, which after a hundred magnificent pages rather lost its way and meandered to an unsatisfactory and rather contrived climax, *The Shadow Lines* is a masterpiece of plotting. With this book Ghosh confirms a reputation for technical skill that most writers around the world would envy.

Three other works of Indo-Anglian fiction are worth citing. Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August* works very well within some self imposed limitations. Evocative, candid and in parts inspired, this portrait of a district administrator's life in a rural backwater portrays an India, and an Indian perspective, unknown in English-language works. The limitations come from the author's tendency to narrow his vision to a point where every character seems to sound alike, behave alike, and, worse, think alike. But *English, August* has the single most memorable simile of all Indo-Anglian writing—a character who "Smelled like a scented eraser from a geometry box." Only Indians, who almost uniquely in the world possess these antediluvian instruments of mathematical learning, can fully appreciate the effectiveness of that precisely conjured odour.

Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* also depicts an India almost no one has written about within the covers of a novel—"almost", because Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* tread some of the same ground, and with greater wit and irony. The lack of these qualities in Ms. De's comes as a

Shashi Tharoor is a U.N. civil servant and the author of The Great Indian Novel, *published by Penguin India.*

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Of Books Read and Remembered

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surprise to fans of her sharp-edged columns in the national press, but *Evenings* is an entertaining read for all that, its flow smooth and its mood convincing. Shobha De has already completed the manuscript of her second novel, and in that haste may lie the explanation for the relatively low level of her achievement. No explanation is easily available, though, for the other woman writer on my list, Gita Mehta, whose *Raj*, a touristy catalogue of princely exotica, lacks all the qualities that made her *Karma Cola* so memorable. With plot devoid of suspense or imagination and prose that is too often handcuffed to the humdrum, *Raj* is a book unworthy of Ms. Mehta's obvious talents.

One work of Indo-Anglian non-fiction took up much my reading time during the first months of the year—Nirad Chaudhuri's *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*, the massive sequel to his epochal *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. *Thy Hand, Great Anarch* has all the qualities that Nirad-babu is famous for: rolling Edwardian prose with sentences of mellifluous pedantry, sharply-etched recollections in vivid detail of events and characters who have crossed the author's path, and opinions of various degrees of idiosyncrasy, with some of which it is impossible to agree. But it is an extraordinary portrait of a remarkable mind and one can only hope Nirad-babu enjoys another thirty years of life to produce a third volume in this astonishing series.

Indian writing has attained a profusion and a proficiency that gives it an obvious claim to the attention of any Indian reader.

My reading in 1989 was not entirely chauvinistic, though many of the non-Indian books do not particularly deserve recollection. Of those that do, *Citizens* by Simon Schama is an excellent evocation of the French Revolution, warts and all. Though the perspective is somewhat reactionary—Schama clearly does not see the Cataclysm of 1789 as a Good Thing—the debunking is done with verve and imagination, and the writing is always fresh and often witty. This is precisely what is missing in Paul Kennedy's over-rated *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, a dull and laboured exercise in explication of a brilliant theory. The theory (that a "Great Power's" military strength is a reflection of economic power, but the maintenance of that strength beyond a certain level saps economic resources to a point that leads to the decline of the Great Power itself) is fine, but it could have been defended in a monograph. The only justification for dilating the thesis at such length would have been if it was done with wit and style. Sadly, neither is present in Kennedy's disappointing *magnum opus*.

Of foreign fiction, three books linger in the memory: David Lodge's charming social comedy, *Nice Work*, in which lit-crit meets industrial Britain; Michael Frayn's short, captivating and ultimately bleak novel *The Trick of It*, surprisingly omitted from the Booker Prize shortlist this year; and the winner of that prize, *The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro's precise, carefully written story of a 1930s butler amid the decay of the English aristocracy. A fourth novel that has been disappointingly easy to forget was John Updike's *S*, half-realistic, half-paradied exegesis on a Guru in a US commune with an uncanny resemblance to Rajneeshpuram.

Overall, 1989 remains for me a year distinguished by good Indian writing in English, confirming we are well on the way to a literature of great distinction which can more than hold its own with the best in the contemporary world. ❑

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Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?

A.K. Ramanujan

This essay forms a part of the book entitled *India Through Hindu Categories*, edited by Mckim Marriot and published for the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi by Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. (1990, Rs 250.00).

WALTER BENJAMIN once dreamed of hiding behind a phalanx of quotations which, like highwaymen, would ambush the passing reader and rob him of his convictions.

Stanislavsky had an exercise for his actors. He would give them an everyday sentence like, 'Bring me a cup of tea', and ask them to say it forty different ways, using it to beg, question, mock, wheedle, be imperious, etc. My question, 'Is there an Indian way of thinking?', is a good one for such an exercise. Depending on where the stress is placed, it contains many questions—all of which are real questions—asked again and again when people talk about India. Here are a few possible versions:

Is there an Indian way of thinking?
Is there an Indian way of thinking?
Is there an Indian way of thinking?
Is there an Indian way of thinking?

The answers are just as various. Here are a few: There *was* an Indian way of thinking; there isn't any more. If you want to learn about the Indian way of thinking, do not ask your modern-day citified Indians, go to the pundits, the *vaidyas*, the old texts. On the contrary: India never changes; under the veneer of the modern, Indians still think like the vedas.

The second question might elicit answers like these: There is no single Indian way of thinking; there are Great and Little Traditions, ancient and modern, rural and urban, classical and folk. Each language, caste and region has its special world view. So, under the apparent diversity, there is really a unity of viewpoint, a single supersystem. Vedists see a vedic model in all Indian thought. Nehru made the phrase 'unity in diversity' an Indian slogan. The Sahitya Akademi's line has been, 'Indian literature is One, though written in many languages'.

The third question might be answered: What we see in India is nothing special to India; it is nothing but pre-industrial, pre-printing press, face-to-face, agricultural, feudal. Marxists, Freudians, McLuhanites, all have their labels for the stage India is in, according to their schemes of social evolution; India is only an example. Others, of course, would argue the uniqueness of the Indian Way and how it turns all things, especially rivals and enemies, into itself; look at what has happened to Indo-Europeans in India, they would say: their language gets shot with retroflexes, their syntax with nominal compounds, they lose their nerve—the British are only the most recent example (according to Nirad Chaudhuri). Look what happens to Buddhism, Islam, the Parsis. There is an *Indian* way, and it imprints and patterns all things that enter the continent; it is inescapable, and it is Bigger Than All of Us.

The fourth question may question whether Indians think at all: It is the West that is materialistic, rational; Indians have no philosophy, only religion, no positive sciences, not even a psychology; in India, matter is subordinated to spirit, rational thought of feeling, intuition. And even when people agree that this is the case, we can have arguments for and against it. Some lament, others celebrate India's un-thinking ways. One can go on forever.

We—I, certainly—have stood in one or another of these stances at different times. We have not heard the end of these questions—or these answers.

The problem was posed for me personally at the age of 20 in the image of my father. I had never taken a good look at him till then. Didn't Mark Twain say, 'At 17, I thought my father was ignorant; at 20, I wondered how he learned so much in three years'? Indeed, this essay was inspired by contemplation of him over the years, and is dedicated to him.

My father's clothes represented his inner life very well. He was a south Indian Brahmin gentleman. He wore neat white turbans, a Sri Vaisnava caste mark (in his earlier pictures, a diamond earring), yet wore Tootal ties, Kromentz buttons and collar studs, and donned English serge jackets over his muslin *dhotis* which he wore draped in traditional Brahmin style. He often wore tartan-patterned socks and silent well-polished leather shoes when he went to the university, but he carefully took them off before he entered the inner quarters of the house.

He was a mathematician, an astronomer. But he was also a Sanskrit scholar, an expert astrologer. He had two kinds of exotic visitors: American and English mathematicians who called on him when they were on a visit to India, and local astrologers, orthodox pundits who wore splendid gold-embroidered shawls dowered by the Maharajah. I had just been converted by Russell to the 'scientific attitude'. I (and my generation) was troubled by his holding together in one brain both astronomy and astrology; I looked for consistency in him, a consistency he didn't seem to care about, or even think about. When I asked him what the discovery of Pluto and Neptune did to his archaic nine-planet astrology, he said, 'You make the necessary corrections, that's all.' Or, in answer to how he could read the Gita religiously, having bathed and painted on his forehead the red and white feet of Visnu, and later talk appreciatively about Bertrand Russell and even Ingersoll, he said, 'The Gita is part of one's hygiene. Besides, don't you know, the brain has two lobes?'

The following poem says something about the way he and his friends appeared to me:

Sky-man in a man-hole
with astronomy for dream,
astrology for nightmare;

fat man full of proverbs,
the language of lean years,
living in square after

almanac square
prefiguring the day
of windfall and landslide

through a calculus
of good hours,
clutching at the tear

in his birthday shirt
as at a hole
in his mildewed horoscope,

squinting at the parallax
of black planets,
his 'Tiger, his Hare

moving in Sanskrit zodiacs,
forever troubled
by the fractions, the kidneys

in his Tamil flesh,
his body the Great Bear
dipping for the honey,

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the woman-smell
in the small curly hair
down there.

Both Englishmen and 'modern' Indians have been dismayed and angered by this kind of inconsistency. About twenty years ago, The *Illustrated Weekly of India* asked a number of modern Indian intellectuals to describe the Indian character—they did not seem to be daunted by the assignment and wrote terse, some quite sharp, columns. *They* all seemed to agree on one thing: the Indian trait of hypocrisy. Indians do not mean what they say, and say different things at different times. By 'Indians' they did not mean only servants. In Max Müller's lectures (1883) on India, the second chapter was called 'Truthful character of the Hindus', in answer to many complaints.

Recently I attended a conference on *karma*, a notion that is almost synonymous in some circles with whatever is Indian or Hindu. Brahminical texts had it, the Buddhists had it, the Jainas had it. But when I looked at hundreds of Kannada tales, I couldn't find a single tale that used *karma* as a motif or motive. Yet when their children made a mess, their repertoire of abuse included, 'You are my *karma*! When Harper (1959) and others after him reported that many Indian villagers didn't know much about reincarnation, such a discrepancy was attributed to caste, education, etc. But the 2,000 Kannada tales, collected by me and others over the past twnety years, were told by Brahmins, Jainas (both of whom use *karma* in their explanations elsewhere quite readily), and by other communities as well. What is worse, Sheryl Daniel (1983) independently found that her Tamil villagers alternately used *karma and talaividi* ('headwriting') as explanations for the events around them. The two notions are inconsistent with each other. *Karma* implies the self's past determining the present, an iron chain of cause and consequence, an ethic of responsibility. *Talaividi* is one's fate inscribed arbitrarily at one's birth on one's forehead; the inscription has no relation to one's prior actions; usually in such explanations (and folktales about them) past lives are not even part of the scheme (see also Wadley, in this volume).

Another related characteristic seems to preoccupy observers. We have already said that 'inconsistency' (like my father's, or the Brahmin/Jaina use of *karma*) is not a matter of inadequate education or lack of logical rigor. They may be using a different 'logic' altogether. Some thinkers believe that such logic is an earlier-stage of 'cultural evolution' and that Indians have not developed a notion of 'data', of 'objective facts'. Edward Said's *Orientalism* cites many such European sterotypes about the 'Third World'. Here is Henry Kissinger's explanation:

> Cultures which escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking have retained the essentially pre-Newtonian view that the world is almost completely *internal* to the observer . . . [Consequently] empirical reality has a much different significance for many of the new [old?] countries than for the West because in certain sense they never went through the process of discovering it (Said 1978: 47).

Such a view cannot be dismissed as peculiar to Kissinger's version of Newtonian optics. One meets with it again and again in travelogues, psychological writings, novels. Naipaul quotes Sudhir Kakar, a sophisticated psychoanalyst, deeply knowledgeable in matters Indian as well as Western, an insider/outsider:

> Generally among Indians there seems to be a different relationship to outside reality, compared to the one met with in the West. In India it is closer to a certain stage in childhood when outer objects did not have a separate, independent existence but were intimately related to the self and its affective states . . . . The Indian 'ego' is underdeveloped; the world of magic and animistic thinking lie close to the surface; so the grasp of reality is 'relatively tenuous' (1977: 107).

In a memorable and oft-quoted section of Foster's *A Passage to India*, Mrs. Moore muses vividly on the relations between inside and outside in India; the confounding of the two is not special to humans in India:

> Going to hang up her cloak, she found the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp. She had known this wasp or his relatives by song; they were not as English wasps, but had long yellow legs which hung down behind when they flew. Perhaps he mistook the peg for a branch—no Indian animal has any sense of an interior. Bats, rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside the house as out, it is to them a normal growth of the eternal jungle, which alternately produces houses, trees, houses, trees. There he clung, asleep, while jackals bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums (1952: 35).

And sympaticos, like Zimmer, praise the Indians for not being hung up on an objectivity that distinguishes self from non-self, interior from exterior; what for Naipaul is a 'defect of vision', is for Zimmer vision itself:

> India thinks of time and herself . . . in biological terms, terms of the species, not of the ephemeral ego . . . . We of the west regard world history as a biography of mankind, and in particular of Occidental Man . . . . Our will is not to culminate in our human institutions the universal play of nature, but to evaluate, to set ourselves against the play, with an ego-centric tenacity (1946: 21).

A third trait should be added to 'inconsistency', and to the apparent inability to distinguish self and non-self. One has only to read Manu after a bit of Kant to be struck by the former's extraordinary lack of universality. He seems to have no clear notion of a universal *human* nature from which one can deduce ethical decrees like 'Man shall not kill', or 'Man shall not tell an untruth'. One is aware of no notion of a 'state', no unitary law of all men. Manu VIII. 267 (quoted by Müller 1883) has the following: A Kshatriya, having defamed a Brahmana, shall be fined one hundred (*panas*); a Vaisya one hundred and fifty or two hundred; a Sudra shall suffer corporal punishment.

Even truth-telling is not an unconditional imperative, as Müller's correspondents discovered.

> An untruth spoken by people under the influence of anger, excessive joy, fear, pain, or grief, by infants, by very old men, by persons labouring under a delusion, being under the influence of drink, or by mad men, does not cause the speaker to fall, or as we should say, is a venial not a mortal sin (Gautama, paraphrased by Müller [1883: 70]).

Alexander Wilder adds, in a footnote, further extensions:

> At the time of marriage, during dalliance, when life is in danger, when the loss of property is threatened, and for the sake of a Brahmana . . . Manu declared . . . . whenever the death of a man of any of the four castes would be occasioned by true evidence, falsehood was even better than truth (Müller 1883: 89).

Contrast this with Kant's well-known formulation of his imperative: 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature' (Copleston 1946: 116).

'Moral judgements are universalizable', says Mackie (1977: 83). Universalisation means putting oneself in another's place—it is the golden rule of the New Testament, Hobbes' 'law of all men': do not do unto others what you do not want done unto you. The main tradition of Judeo/Christian ethics is based on such a premise of universalisation—Manu will not understand such a premise. To be moral, for Manu, is to particularise—to ask who did what, to whom and when. Shaw's comment, 'Do not do unto others as you would have they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same' (Mackie 1977: 89) will be closer to Manu's view, except he would substitute 'natures or classes' for 'tastes'. Each class (*jati*) of man has his own laws, his own proper ethic, not to be universalised. Hegel shrewdly noted this Indian slant: 'While we say, "Bravery is a virtue," the Hindoos say, on the contrary, "Bravery is a virtue of the Cshatriyas"' (Hegel *ca.* 1827: First part, Sec. 2, 'India').

Is there any system to this particularism? Indian philosophers do not seem to make synoptic 'systems' like Hegel's or Kant's. Sheryl Daniel (1983) speaks of a 'tool-box' of ideas that Indians carry about, and from which they use one or another without much show of logic; anything goes into their 'bricolage' (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 16–36). Max Weber, in various writings, distinguished 'traditional' and 'rational' religions. Geertz summarises the distinction better than other writers:

> Traditional religions attack problems opportunistically as they arise in each particular instance . . . employing

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one or another weapon chosen, on grounds of symbolic appropriateness, from their cluttered arsenal of myth and magic . . . the approach . . . is discrete and irregular . . . . Rationalized religions . . . are more abstract, more logically coherent, and more generally phrased . . . The question is no longer . . . to use a classical example from Evans-Pritchard, 'Why has the granary fallen on my brother . . .?' but rather, 'Why do the good die young and the evil flourish as the green bay tree?' (Geertz 1973: 172).

It is time to step back and try a formulation. The grammarian sees grammar in all things; I shall be true to my bias and borrow a notion from linguistics and try it for size.

There are (or used to be) two kinds of grammatical rules: the context-free and the context-sensitive (Lyons 1971: 235–41). 'Sentences must have subjects and predicates in a certain relation' would be an example of the first kind of rule. 'Plurals in English are realised as *-s* after stops (e.g., dog-s, cat-s), *-es* before fricatives (e.g., latch-es), *ren* after the word *child*, etc.'—would be a context-sensitive rule. Almost all language rules are of the latter kind.

I think cultures (may be said to) have overall tendencies (for whatever complex reasons)—tendencies to *idealise*, and think in terms of, either the context-free or the context-sensitive kind of rules. Actual behaviour may be more complex, though the rules they think with are a crucial factor in guiding the behaviour. In cultures like India's, the context-sensitive kinjd of rule is the preferred formulation. Manu (I have already quoted a law of his) explicitly says: '[A king] who knows the sacred law, must imagine into the laws of caste (*jati*), of districts, of guilds, and of families, and [thus] settle the peculiar law of each' (Manu 7.41).

In an illuminating discussion of the context-sensitive nature of *dharma* in its detail, Baudhayana enumerates aberrant practices peculiar to the Brahmins of the north and those of the south.

> There is a difference between the South and the North on five points. We shall describe the practices of the South: to eat with a person not having received Brahmanical initiation; to eat with one's wife; to eat food prepared the previous day; to marry the daughter of the maternal uncle or paternal aunt. And for the North: to sell wool; to drink spirits; to traffic in animals with two rows of teeth; to take up the profession of arms; to make sea voyages.

After this admirable etnographic description, he notes that all these practices are contrary to the precepts of *´sruti* or *smrti*, but these *´sistas* (learned men) know the traditions and cannot be blamed for following the customs of their district. In the north, the southern ways would be wrong and vice versa (Lingat 1973: 196).

Add to this view of right and wrong behaviour, the ethical views of the *asramadharma* (the conduct that is right for one's stage of life), *svadharma* (the conduct that is right for one's station, *jati* or class, or *svabhava* or given nature), and *apaddharma* (conduct that is necesary in times of distress or emergency, e.g., one may even eat the flesh of dogs to save oneself from death by starvation, as sage Visvamitra did). Each addition is really a subtraction from any universal law. There is not much left of an absolute or common (*sadharana*) *dharma* which the texts speak of, if at all, as a last and not as a first resort. They seem to say, if you fit no contexts or conditions, which is unlikely, fall back on the universal.

I know of no Hindu discussion of values which reads like Plato on Beauty in his *Symposium*—which asks the initiate not to rest content with beauty in one embodiment but to be drawn onward from physical to moral beauty, to the beauty of laws and mores, and to all science and learning, and thus to escape 'the mean slavery of the particular case'. (I am reserving counter-instances for later.)

Or take Indian litrary texts. No Indian text comes without a context, a frame, till the 19th century. Works are framed by *phalasruti* verses—these verses tell the reader, reciter or listener all the good that will result from his act of reading, reciting or listening. They relate the text, of whatever antiquity, to the present reader—that is, they contextualise it. An extreme case is that of the Nadisastra, which offers you your personal history. A friend of mine consulted the Experts about himself and his past and future. After enough rupees had been exchanged, the Experts brought out an old palm-leaf manuscript which, in archaic verses, mentioned his full name, age, birthplace, etc., and said suddenly, 'At this point, the listener is crossing his legs—he should uncross them.'

Texts may be historically dateless, anonymous; but their contexts, uses, efficacies, are explicit. The Ramayana and Mahabharata open with episodes that tell you why and under what circumstances they were composed. Every such story is encased in a metastory. And within the text, one tale is the context for another within it; not only does the outer frame-story motivate the inner sub-story; the inner story illuminates the outer as well. It often acts as a microcosmic replica for the whole text. In the forest when the Pandava brothers are in exile, the eldest, Yudhisthira, is in the very slough of despondency: he has gambled away a kingdom, and is in exile. In the depth of his despair, a sage visits him and tells him the story of Nala. As the story unfolds, we see Nala too gamble away a kingdom, lose his wife, wander in the forest, and finally, win his wager, defeat his brother, reunite with his wife and return to his kingdom. Yudhisthira, following the full curve of Nala's adventures, sees that he is only halfway through his own, and sees his present in perspective, himself as a story yet to be finished. Very often the Nala story is excerpted and read by itself, but its poignancy is partly in its frame, its meaning for the hearer within the fiction and for the listener of the whole epic. The tale within is context-sensitive—getting its meaning from the tale without, and giving it further meanings.

Scholars have often discussed Indian texts (like the Mahabharata) as if they were loose-leaf files, rag-bag encyclopaedias. Taking the Indian word for text, *grantha* (derived from the knot that holds the palm leaves together), literally, scholars often posit only an accidental and physical unity. We need to attend to the context-sensitive designs that embed a seeming variety of modes (tale, discourse, poem, etc.) and materials. This manner of constructing the text is in consonance with other designs in the culture. Not unity (in the Aristotelian sense) but coherence, seems to be the end.

Tamil (and Sanskrit) lyrics are all dramatic monologues; they imply the whole 'communication diagram': who said what to whom, when, why, and often with who else overhearing it. Here is an example:

What his concubine said about him (within earshot of the wife's friends, when she heard that the wife had said disparaging things about her):

You know he comes from
where the fresh-water shark in the pools
catch with their mouths
the mangoes as they fall, ripe
from the trees on the edge of the field.

At our place
he talked big.

Now back in his own
when others raise their hands
and feet,
he will raise his too:

like a doll
in a mirror
he will shadow
every last wish
of his son's dear mother.

Kuruntokai 8 (Ramanujan 1967: 22)

The colophons give us the following frames for this poem:

Genre: *Akam*, love poetry, the 'interior'.
Landscape: agricultural, with pool, fresh-water fish, mango trees.
Mood: infidelity, sullenness, lover's quarrels.

The poetry of such a poem (see Ramanujan 1967 for details) depends on a taxonomy of landscapes, flora and fauna, and of emotions—an ecosystem of which a man's activities and feelings are a part. To describe the exterior landscape is also to inscribe the interior landscape. What the man has, he is: the landscape which he owns, in which he lives (where sharks do not have to work for the mango, it falls into its open mouth) re-presents him: it is his *property*, in more senses than one. In Burke's (1946) terms, *Scene and Agent* are one; they are metonyms for one another.

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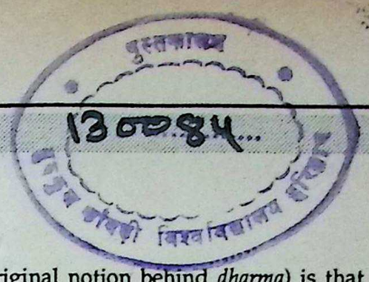

The poem does not use a metaphor. The human agents are simply *placed* in the scene. Both parts of the comparison (the man and shark) are part of one scene, one syntagm; they exist separately, yet simulate each other. The Tamils call such a figure *ullurai* 'inward speaking'; it is an 'inset', an 'inscape'. In such a metonymic view of man in nature—man in context—he is continuous with the context he is in. In Peircean semiotic terms, these are not symbolic devices, but indexical signs—the signifier and the signified belong in the same context (Peirce 1931–58).

One might say, from this point of view, that Hindu ritual (e.g., vedic sacrifice, or a coronation; see Inden [1978]) converts *symbols*, arbitrary signs (e.g., sacrificial horse), into *icons* where the signifier (the horse) is *like* what it signifies (the universe) and finally into *indexes*, where the signifier is *part* of what it signifies: the horse is the Universe is Prajapati, so that in sacrificing and partaking of it one is sacrificing and partaking of the Universe itself (see the passage on the Horse in *Brhadaranyaka*, First Adhyaya, First Brahmana).

Neither in the Tamil poem nor in the upanisadic passages (e.g., the Horse), does the Lévi-Straussian opposition of nature-culture make sense; we see that the opposition itself is culture-bound. There is another alternative to a culture vs. nature view: in the Tamil poems, culture is enclosed in nature, nature is reworked in culture, so that we cannot tell the difference. We have a nature-culture continuum that cancels the terms, confuses them even if we begin with them.

Such container-contained relations are seen in many kinds of concepts and images: not only in culture-nature, but god-world, king-kingdom, devotee-god, mother-child. Here is a *bhakti* poem. It plays with many such concentric containments:

My dark one
Stands there as if nothing's changed,
after taking entire
into his maw
all three worlds
the gods
and the good kings
who hold their lands
as a mother would
a child in her womb—
and I, by his leave,
have taken him entirely
and I have him in my belly
for keeps.

Nammalvar 8.7.1 (Ramanujan 1980)

Like the Nala story in the Mahabharata, what is contained mirrors the container; the microcosm is both *within* and like the macrocosm, and paradoxically also contains it. Indian conceptions tend to be such concentric nests: the view of the 'sheaths' or *kosas*, the different 'bodies' or *kayas* (Egnor 1975) are examples. Such impressions are so strong and even kinesthetic that analysts tend to think in similar terms: one example is Dumont's (1970: Sects. 31, 34, 106, 118; App. E, F) notions of hierarchic encompassment, where each higher category or *jati* encompasses all the earlier ones: the Ksatriya is distinct from but includes the Vaisya, as the Brahmin encompasses the Ksatriya. Many Indian lists, like *dharma-arthakama* tend to be successive encompassments. (For the separation of *moksa*, see below.)

Even space and time, the universal contexts, the Kantian imperatives, are in India not uniform and neutral, but have properties, varying specific densities, that affect those who dwell in them. The soil in a village, which produces crops for the people, affects their character (as liars, for instance, in E.V. Daniel's village (1984); houses (containers par excellence) have mood and character, change the fortune and moods of the dwellers. Time too does not come in uniform units: certain hours of the day, certain days of the week, etc., are auspicious or inauspicious (*rahukala*); certain units of time (*yugas*) breed certain kinds of maladies, politics, religions, e.g., *kaliyuga*. A story is told about two men coming to Yudhisthira with a case. One had bought the other's land, and soon after found a crock of gold in it. He wanted to return it to the original owner of the land, who was arguing that it really belonged to the man who had now bought it. They had come to Yudhisthira to settle their virtuous dispute. Just then Yudhisthira was called away (to put it politely) for a while. When he came back the two gentlemen were quarrelling furiously, but each was claiming the treasure for himself this time! Yudhisthira realised at once that the age had changed, and *kaliyuga* had begun.

As hour, month, season, year, and aeon have their own properties as contexts, the arts that depend on time have to obey time's changing moods and properties. For instance, the *ragas* of both north and south Indian classical music have their prescribed appropriate times. Like the Tamil poems, the genres and moods are associated with, placed in, hours of the day and times of the season. Even musical instruments have their caste properties; a *vina*, no less than the icon of a god, has to be made by a particular caste, or family, after observing certain austerities (*vrata*), made on an auspicious day; the gourd from which it is made has to be taken from certain kinds of places. Their *gunas* (qualities of substance) affect the quality of the instrument, the music.

The same kind of contextual sensitiveness is shown in medical matters: in preparing a herbal medicine, in diagnosis and in prescription. As Zimmermann's work (1980) is eloquent on the subject, I shall say little. The notion of *rtusatmya* or appropriateness applies to poetry, music, sacrificial ritual, as well as medicine. As Renou (1950a, 1950b) points out, *rtu*, usually translated as 'season', means articulation of time; it is also the crucial moment in vedic sacrifice. *Rta* ('order', the original notion behind *dharma*) is that which is articulated. *Kratu*, sacrifice, is a convergence of events, acts, times and spaces. The vocabulary of *rtusatmya* 'appropriateness', *rasa* 'essences, flavours, tastes', *dosa* 'defects, deficiency', and of landscapes is common to both medicine and poetry: the arts of man reading and re-forming himself in his contexts.

Thus, all things, even so-called non-material ones like space and time or caste, affect other things because all things are 'substantial' (*dhatu*). The only difference is that some are subtle (*suksma*), some gross (*sthula*). Contrary to the notion that Indians are 'spiritual', they are really 'material minded'. They are materialists, believers in substance (Marriott 1976, 1980): there is a continuity, a constant flow (the etymology of *samsara*!) of substance from context to object, from non-self to self (if you prefer)—in eating, breathing, sex, sensation, perception, thought, art, or religious experience. This is the grain of truth glimpsed by many of the sterotypes cited in the earlier parts of this essay. Zimmermann (1979) points out that in Indian medical texts, the body is a meeting-place, a conjunction of elements; they have a physiology, but no anatomy.

Where Kissinger and others are wrong is in not seeing that this view has nothing to do with Newtonian revolution, education, or (in) capacity for abstract thought. Cognitive anthropologists like Richard Shweder (1972) have studied descriptive phrases used by highly intelligent Oriya and American adults and shown that they describe persons very differently: Americans characterised them with generic words like 'good', 'nice', Oriyas with concrete contxtual descriptions like 'he brings sweets'. The psychoanalyst Alan Roland (1979) suggests that Indians carry their family-context wherever they go, feel continuous with their family. He posits a familial self, a 'self-we regard', sees no phase of separation/individuation from the parental family as in modern America; hence there seems to be no clear-cut adolescent phase through which one rebels, and thereby separates and individuates oneself in opposition to one's family (the exceptions are in 'modern' urban-centred families). Roland remarks that Indians develop a 'radar' *conscience* that orients them to others, makes them say things that are appropriate to person and context. (No wonder Max Müller had to insist that Indians were truthful!) Roland also found that when directions to places are given, Indians always make reference to other places, landmarks.

Such a pervasive emphasis on context is, I think, related to the Hindu concern with *jati*—the logic of classes, of genera and species, of which human *jatis* are only an instance. Various taxonomies of season, landscape, times, *gunas* or qualities (and their material bases), tastes, characters, emotions, essences (*rasa*), etc., are basic to the thought-work of Hindu medicine and poetry, cooking and religion, erotics and magic. Each *jati* or class defines a

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context, a structure of relevance, a rule of permissible combinations, a frame of reference, a meta-communication of what is and can be done.

It is not surprising that systems of Indian philosophy, Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina,

> confine themselves to the consideration of class-essences (*jati*) called genera and species in Western philosophy. They never raise the question of whether there are universals of other types, namely identical qualities and relations. The assumption seems to be that qualities and relations are particulars, though they may be instances of universals (Dravid 1972: 347).

The most important and accessible model of a context-sensitive system with intersecting taxonomies is, of course, the grammar of a language. And grammar is the central model for thinking in many Hindu texts. As Frits Staal has said, what Euclid is to European thought, the grammarian Panini is to the Indian. Even the Kamasutra is literally a grammar of love—which declines and conjugates men and women as one would nouns and verbs in different genders, voices, moods and aspects. Genders are genres. Different body-types and character-types obey different rules, respond to different scents and beckonings.

In such a world, systems of meaning are elicited by contexts, by the nature (and substance) of the listener. In *Brhadaranyaka* 5.1., Lord Prajapati speaks in thunder three times: 'DA DA DA'. When the gods, given to pleasure hear it, they hear it as the first syllable of *damyata*, 'control'. The antigods, given as they are to cruelty, hear it as *dayadhvam*, 'be compassionate'. When the humans, given to greed, hear it they hear it as *datta*, 'give to others'.

All societies have context-sensitive behaviour and rules—but the dominant ideal may not be the 'context-sensitive' but the 'context-free'. Egalitarian democratic ideals, Protestant Christianity, espouse both the universal and the unique, insist that any member is *equal* to and *like* any other in the group. Whatever his context—birth, class, gender, age, place, rank, etc.—a man is a man for all that. Technology with its modules and interchangeable parts, and the post-Renaissance sciences with their quest for universal laws (and 'facts') across contexts intensify the bias towards the context-free. Yet societies have underbellies. In predominantly 'context-free' societies, the counter-movements tend to be towards the context-sensitive: situation ethics, Wittgensteinian notions of meaning and colour (against class-logic), the various relativisms including our own search for 'native categories' in anthropology, holistic movements in medicine (naturopaths who prescribe individually tailored regimens) are good examples. In 'traditional' cultures like India, where context-sensitivity rules and binds, the dream is to be free of context. So *rasa* in aesthetics, *moksa* in the 'aims of life', *sannyasa* in the life-stages, *sphota* in semantics, and *bhakti* in religion define themselves against a background of inexorable contextuality.

Where *kama*, *artha* and *dharma* are all relational in their values, tied to place, time, personal character and social role, *moksa* is the release from all relations. If *brahmacarya* (celibate studentship) is preparation for a fully relational life, *grhasthasrama* (householder stage) is a full realisation of it. Manu prefers the latter over all other states. *Vanaprastha* (the retiring forest-dweller stage) loosens the bonds, and *sannyasa* (renunciation) cremates all one's past and present relations. In the realm of feeling, *bhavas* are private, contingent, context-roused sentiments, *vibhavas* are determinant causes, *anubhavas* the consequent expressions. But *rasa* is generalised, it is an essence. In the field of meaning, the temporal sequence of letters and phonemes, the syntactic chain of words, yields finally a *sphota*, an explosion, a meaning which is beyond sequence and time.

In each of these the pattern is the same: a necessary sequence in time with strict rules of phase and context ending in a free state.

The last of the great Hindu anti-contextual notions, *bhakti*, is different from the above; it denies the very need for context. *Bhakti* defies all contextual structures: every pigeonhole of caste, ritual, gender, appropriate clothing and custom, stage of life, the whole system of homo hierarchicus ('everything in its place') is the target of its irony.

Did the breath of the mistress
have breasts and long hair?

Or did the master's breath
wear sacred thread?

Did the outcaste, last in line,
hold with his outgoing breath
the stick of his tribe?

What do the fools of this world know
of the snares you set.
O Ramanatha?

Dasimayya, 10th century (Ramanujan 1973)

In European culture, one might mention Plato's rebellion against (even the limited) Athenian democracy. Or Blake in the technocratic democracy of the 19th century railing against egalitarianism, abstraction, and the dark Satanic mills, calling for 'minute particulars', declaring 'To generalize is to be an idiot' (generalising thereby); and framing the slogan of all context-sensitive systems: 'one law for the lion and the ox is oppression'. I would include the rise of minute realism in the 19th century novel, various 'indexical' movements of modern art in this counter-thrust towards particularism in the West.

Neither the unique, nor the universal, the two, often contradictory, concerns of western philosophy, art and polity, are the central concern of the Indian arts and sciences—except in the counter-cultures and modern attempts, which quickly get enlisted and remolded (witness the fate of *bhakti* movements) by the prevailing context-sensitive patterns.

In conclusion, I would like to make a couple of observations about 'modernisation'. One might see 'modernisation' in India as a movement from the context-sensitive to the context-free in all realms: an erosion of contexts, at least in principle. Gandhi's watch (with its uniform autonomous time, governing his punctuality) replaced the almanac. Yet Gandhi quoted Emerson, that consistency was the hobgoblin of foolish minds. Print replaced palm-leaf manuscripts, making possible an open and egalitarian access to knowledge irrespective of caste. The Indian Constitution made the contexts of birth, region, sex and creed irrelevant, overthrowing Manu, though the battle is joined again and again. The new preferred names give no clue to birth-place, father's name, caste, sub-caste and sect, as all the traditional names did: I once found in a Kerala college roster, three 'Joseph Stalins' and one 'Karl Marx'. I have also heard of an Andhra named 'Bobbili Winston Churchill'.

In music, the *ragas* can now be heard at all hours and seasons. Once the Venkatesasuprabhatam, the wake-up chant for the Lord of Tirupati, could be heard only in Tirupati at a certain hour in the morning. Since M.S. Subbulakshmi in her devotion cut a record of the chants, it wakes up not only the Lord, but anyone who tunes in to All India Radio in faraway places.

Cultural borrowings from India to the West, or vice versa, also show interesting accommodations to the prevailing system. The highly contextualised Hindu systems are generalised into 'a Hindu view of life' by apologues like Radhakrishnana for the benefit of both the Western and modern Indian readers. The individual esoteric skills of meditation are freed from their contexts into a streamlined widely accessible technique. And when T.S. Eliot borrows the DA DA DA passage (quoted earlier) to end 'The wasteland' (1930), it becomes highly individual, introspective, as well as universal:

Then spoke the thunder
DA
datta: *what have we given?*
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under the seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms
DA
dayadhvam: *I have heard the key*

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Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only a nightfall, aetheral rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA
damyata: *The boat responded*
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heat would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

In reverse, Indian borrowings of Western cultural items have been converted and realigned to fit pre-existing context-sensitive needs. When English is borrowed into (or imposed on) Indian contexts, it fits into the Sanskrit slot; it acquires many of the characteristics of Sanskrit, the older native Father-tongue, its pan-Indian elite character—as a medium of laws, science and administration, and its formulaic patterns; it becomes part of Indian multiple diglossia (a characteristic of context-sensitive societies). When Indians learn, quite expertly, modern science, business, or technology, they 'compartmentalize' these interests (Singer 1972: 320ff); the new ways of thought and behaviour do not replace, but live along with older 'religious' ways. Computers and typewriters receive *ayudhapuja* ('worship of weapons') as weapons of war did once. The 'modern', the context-free, becomes one more context, though it is not easy to contain.

In modern thought, William James with his 'sub-universes', or Alfred Schutz with his 'finite provinces of reality' and 'relevance' as central concepts in any understanding, should be re-read in the light of what I have said about context-sensitive and context-free modes. The most recent kinds of science can hold together inconsistent systems of explanation—like wave and particle theories of light. The counter-movements in the West toward Schumacher's 'small is beautiful', appropriate technologies, and the attention paid to ethnicity rather than to a melting pot, though not yet successful, are straws in the wind—like the ethnography of communication in linguistics.

My purpose here is not to evaluate but to grope toward a description of the two kinds of emphases. Yet in each of these kinds of cultures, despite all the complexity and oscillation, there is a definite bias. The Buddha (who said 'When we see a man shot with poisoned arrow, we cannot afford to ask what caste he or his enemy is') also told the following parable of the Raft: Once a man was drowning in a sudden flood. Just as he was about to drown, he found a raft. He clung to it, and it carried him safely to dry land. And he was so grateful to the raft that he carried it on his back for the rest of his life. Such was the Buddha's ironic comment on context-free systems. ❑

Ghalib, Two Years After The Mutiny

a poem by Vikram Seth

Dear Yusuf Mirza, none but God can know my plight.
Men have gone mad from cares far less than those I fight.
But grief and cares for what? you ask—what do I claim?—
For death, for parting, for my livelihood, my name,

Whose deaths? I leave aside the stricken Mughul court;
In Delhi proper—not the Inauspicious Fort—
Your uncle; Ashur Beg; and Mir Nasir-ud-din;
My sister's grandson too, a mere child of nineteen;

Mustafa Khan; his sons; the blood flows from my pen.
The names go on; O God! What can replace such men?
Those of my friends who live, like Miran and Majruh,
Condemned to roam the world, may God preserve them too.

My brother died insane; his children and his wife,
Stranded in Jaipur, eke their pittance of a life.
The children of high lords go begging in the street.
My household, God knows how, finds just enough to eat.

Nor is my time my own. I have grown old. How can
I bear this load? I am no giant but a man.
I leave my sickbed, try to sit an hour or two
To write, to plan, to think—but there's too much to do.

As for sustaining wine, my cash won't spill that far—
Still less to buy a gift if called to the durbar.
They used to call me once. Will they do so again?—
I who have neither helped nor harmed the Englishmen.

I'm sending you an ode about my life, which night
And day for two long months I've sweated blood to write.
Say if you think my skill has cheated fortune's knife
Even if my heart lacks fire—why fire? even life.

In my old eulogy, for Amjad Ali's name
I've slotted "Wajid" in; but God has done the same.
Such verse in praise of kings, just notch it down a peg:
I wrote it not to show my prowess but to beg.

More news. That gentle boy, Shivji Ram's son and pride,
Fell ill, lay two days thus, and on the third day died.
His father is distraught with grief, and for my part
I have lost two more friends, one dead, one sick at heart.

Another twenty months, and I too will be dust:
My body to Rampur, my soul to light, I trust.
What grief, joy, praise or shame afflict me in this spell
I will find strength to face. Goodbye. May all be well.

❖

From All You Who Sleep Tonight *by Vikram Seth, published by Penguin (India) Ltd., February, 1990.*

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VISIONS OF GRANDEUR

Narayani Gupta

THE INDIAN METROPOLIS
A View Towards the West

By Norma Evenson

Yale University 1989, Edition for South Asia, published by Oxford University Press, pp. ix + 294, bibliography, 258 photographs and maps, Rs. 450.00

IMPERIAL VISION
Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj

By Thomas R. Metcalf

Faber and Faber, 1989, pp. xiv + 302, glossary, bibliography, 17 photographs + 53 reproductions, Indian price Rs. 375.00

The 1980s could well go down in Indian historiography as the decade when the study of modern Indian architecture got off the ground. It began with Gavin Stamp's article 'British Architecture in India 1857–1947' in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (1981) and ended with the two books under review, and another by G.R. Tillotson (not yet received). Many 'trends' in Indian historical writing have derived from foreign fashions. The history of modern Indian architecture has the further distinction of having hardly any Indian practitioners. It is not that Indian teachers and practitioners of architecture cannot write—the excellent companion volume to the architecture exhibition in France in 1986 proves the contrary—but between their inertia and the diffidence of Indian historians, the study of modern Indian architecture and townplanning—which in sheer volume is staggering—has been appropriated by others. The pioneer was the Swedish art historian, Sten Nilsson, who published his *European Architecture in India till 1850* in 1968 and his *The New Capitals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* in 1973. After a gap there followed the books of the last decade—of Robert Irving, Anthony King (*The Bungalow*), Jan Morris, Philip Davies, Rosie Llewellyn-Jones and, for the period after 1947, Cantacuzino's book on Correa and Curtis on Doshi.

Both books are written with the confidence and assurance of established scholars. Metcalf has moved from his well-used *Aftermath of Revolt* through *Land, Landlords and the Raj* to the present work, a foretaste of his forthcoming book on the ideology of the Raj (to be published in the new Cambridge History of India series).

Evenson's doctoral work on Chandigarh gave us a lucid account of Corbusier's city; subsequently she wrote a superb book on modern Paris, which won her the Prix Haussmann from the City of Paris; this was followed by one on Brasilia. She now returns to India to study India's four largest cities. Taken together, the two two books supplement each other well.

Both studies are placed squarely in the late 19th and 20th centuries, though Evenson has two long chapters about the early growth of these towns, and three on the post-New Delhi period. Her descriptions of the 'British' and 'public' areas are understandably richer, but there are also vivid vignettes of Indian urban lifestyles as perceived by European observers. Metcalf, who is concerned with monumental architecture, sees this as reflecting a conscious ideology of power. His main thesis is therefore set against the background of James Fergusson's impressive tour de force of analysing Indian architecture with a confidence that gave an impression of a mastery of India's architectural past. It is all too easy today to criticise Fergusson for his racial stereotypes and categorical judgments, but it is necessary to recognize that his influence has been extraordinarily pervasive, not only in shaping imperial architectural styles, but in colouring Indians' perceptions of their own past.

In 1870 Bartle Frere stated drily that "When the English nation suddenly found itself the possessor of the great empire and of its great works of architecture, architecture in England was at such a low ebb that we could not realize what was essential to the progress of the art in India. The whole of what the English Government has done for the adornment of the capitals of India may be summed up by saying that very few public buildings have been erected which would be considered in any small seaport town in this country to be above ordinary merit" (Evenson, p.84). In the halfcentury that followed, spectacular measures were taken to remedy this state of affairs, culminating in the building of New Delhi, Britain's parting gift to India. This conscious adoption of a policy of building on a grandiose scale was marked by distinctive styles which were criticised both then and later, and it is to the credit of these two authors that they scrupulously avoid the temptation of passing judgment on the works they discuss.

British Indian architecture of the late nineteenth century was influenced by two movements in Britain—the Gothic Revival and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Fergusson also cast his long shadow over it, since opinion was sharply divided between those who felt that British imperialism

❖

Yet, inevitably, the educated Indian was caught up in an ambivalent response to the buildings he saw around him. Although, on the one hand, the forms of European classicism represented the modern world he sought to enter, at the same time they announced the preeminence of a culture that was not his. Indo-Saracenic forms, by contrast, tied the Indian to a past that his conquerors, not he, had made, and that served their interestes. Yet he could not wholly disown that past, and he could find in it elements of greatness that he sought to claim as his own. In the early twentieth century, Gandhi, and those who with him rejected industrialism, found in the crafts vision much that was attractive, while others derived encouragement from the work of men like Havell who sought to reclaim the country's artistic heritage. The Indians, however, as they took over this ideal of a "spiritual" India based in its villages, infused it with a new, nationalist content. A nostalgia for India's past greatness, memorably evoked in such works as The Discovery of India, stireed even so staunchly modern a nationalist as Jawaharlal Nehru; and during the 1950s, as independent India's first prime minister, he erected in New Delhi's ornate red sandstone Asoka Hotel perhaps India's last major Indo-Saracenic-styled building.

From *Imperial Vision*

Narayani Gupta teaches Modern Indian History at the Jamia Milia Islamia College, New Delhi.

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Charles Correa, arguing that Indians needed to develop a sense of concern for their environment, asked, "how can we reverse generations of apathy? The indifference of the urban Indian to his environment is truly metaphysical. The key ingredient in Mediterranean architecture—all the way back to the Greeks—is pleasure in environment. Architecture and urban planning are hedonistic arts, and there is a connection between Italian architecture, Italian food and Italian piazzas. But the Indian is no hedonist."[37] Correa's comparison of India with Italy is interesting, considering that India itself was once deemed the "Italy of Asia." India, we are often reminded, is a poor country. Italy, too, has known poverty, and the visual delight to be found in Italian cities has often coexisted with dirt, stench, pestilence, and a lack of potable water. Correa's contention that Indians lack sufficient hedonism to produce a pleasurable environment is intriguing and provocative. And there is much to support his view. Even in instances where money does not seem to be the issue, even in luxury buildings, there is often neglect. Viewing Indian cities, one may infer Indians to possess, not merely an indifference, but a deep-seated hatred for the physical world. Buildings are often abused in ways that suggest a pent-up rage that might otherwise be unleashed in a frenzy of social destruction. There seems to be some force at work that is hard to explain. Yet the same Indians who appear in many ways indifferent to their physical surroundings flock to films that transport the viewer into a fantasy world of luxury and elegance. The escapism of films may, in fact, help to make the oppressive urban environment tolerable.

From *The Indian Metropolis*

should set itself in the Indian tradition, and those who believed that the British should adopt a distinctively different style. Within this halfcentury, it is tempting to fall into the Fergusson habit of dividing the decades into chronological sections, each with its dominant style. But such simplification is not possible. When elements of Indian styles were grafted on to European-type structures, these were often dovetailed into neo-Gothic and neoclassical modes to produce extraordinary wedding cake or *petitpoint* effects. The heightened civic consciousness of Bombay's citizens and governments was reflected in the dramatic transformation of its central area into a neo-Gothic area far more distinctive than any part of Calcutta or Madras, or even any British town. This was the golden age of the architects—and the Chisholms, Mants and Swinton Jacobs were much in demand to conjure up bizarre clocktowers, giant-domed museums, dainty palaces, office blocks, colleges, museums. The princes, on the old principle that imitation was the sincerest form of flattery, wanted Gothic or Classical palaces, but were talked out of this into accepting neo-Indic buildings designed by English architects (this neo-Indic was christened Indo-Saracenic, more easily understood as Indo-Islamic). The princes were also persuaded to take munificent donations for public buildings. They won their rewards—the titles, the gun salutes, and that splendid ceiling in Mayo College where a glass disc represented the sun, to symbolize the solar origin of the Rajput dynasties (Metcalf, plate 9).

The story of the planning and building design of New Delhi is a familiar one, and Metcalf's addition to this is to connect this with the building and design of Pretoria, by the same Baker who designed New Delhi's Secretariat buildings. Evenson does not spend too much time on this, except to set it in the context of Delhi after the Rising of 1857 and in terms of the relationship of a planned town in the 20th century to an older historic city adjacent to it.

Behind the monumental domes and the massive office blocks the people of the metropolitan cities built their habitats. The concern with monumental architecture was the bright side of the coin. The obverse was the total lack of interest or concern for the uncontrolled growth of the major towns. This problem—the growth of towns, the absence of planning in the 19th century and the introduction of Improvement Trusts and planning agencies in the 20th, their losing battle against the pressure of population and the manipulation by real estate interests, forms the second part of Evenson's book, definitely the most fascinating, lucidly analysed and tellingly illustrated. Anyone who has waded through the mire of paper produced by official agencies, and tried to separate the grain from the chaff from seminar meanderings, will agree with me that Orientalist or colonial discourse is far easier to unravel than that of the last fifty years. It is not merely a question of identifying an ideology, it is the much more disheartening one of narrating a story of paper resolutions, public apathy and private greed, a story with a 'sad ending'—that of the present urban crisis. This book should be essential reading not just for students of architecture and planning, but for all thoughtful citizens. Evenson's narrative is also enlivened by the delightful turns of phrase—the 'doughnut-like configuration of Delhi', with an empty centre surrounded by dense settlements; Asaf Ali Road, 'less an attempt to ameliorate conditions in Old Delhi than to hide it behind a drab new wall of modern moneygrubbing'; of the new Artists' Village at Belapur, near Bombay—'it seems destined to remain an isolated drop of whimsy in a sea of dullness.' Perhaps the photographs should have carried dates (it is tiresome to have to turn to the credits to ascertain these, and then too not all are given, since the author's own photographs are not dated). There are a few spelling mistakes (Manmatha Nati Ghose, Satish Gujeral). There will always be exception taken to the fact that all the major modern architects have not been represented, but since the author limits her study to the four major cities, this was not possible. My favourite modern Indian building as well as the one I would gladly give a booby prize to are reproduced here. I think this is the most important service performed by this book—that it teaches us to look at our own environment, and hopefully this will generate some *concern* about it, so that we can control it before it gets beyond hope. ❑

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Riding High or in the Doldrums?

Ravi Dayal

If initial printings of 3000 copies in paperback and a sale of 5000–6000 paperbacks in the first year of publication are considered spectacular successes, our ideas of best sellers and a publishing boom are really rather minor. Had say five hundred novels been selling to this extent, the range of sales, if not that of each title, would have added up to a fairly considerable total: but around 30 titles by ten a twelve authors is too small to be treated as a major publishing base.

Between 1961 and 1987, publishing educational, academic and scholarly books was the only job I did. It was an exhilarating experience for me and I worked obsessively. It was fun, and a great delight to help develop what is widely acknowledged to be a strong academic list, to fashion perhaps a thousand titles by authors well known and unknown, and to see how, in course of time, several of these became landmarks in the spread of ideas in India and, frequently, elsewhere in the world. Over the past two years or so, I have been operating a very small publishing house of my own, and attempting to concentrate on serious fiction and creative writing. In this area, too, my enjoyment has continued, and it's been interesting to see the emergence of a small but lively crop of new writers, and the promise of some more in the years to come.

Triggered off by the achievements and successes of this new crop of novelists and one poet, much has been written recently in magazines and newspapers about a boom in Indian publishing and, indeed, of a sort of literary explosion in the country. The same ten or twelve writers in English are mentioned in each article, and Salman Rushdie, who ceased being an Indian citizen perhaps twenty-five years ago, usually heads the list. It is, of course, very good to have such writers and their works amidst us, and their being avidly read and discussed; but, even so, ten or twelve saleable authors of calibre do not really constitute a publishing boom or a literary explosion in a country of India's size and potential talent. It would be a strangely silent subcontinent if they did and all of us know that India is perhaps the noisiest country in the world, where even ten blazing loudspeakers in a neighbourhood do not result in a raised eyebrow.

Booms and explosions apart, remember, too, that most of these new writers in English are first published in Britain or America and that the editions of their works available in India are usually restricted to South Asia. Thus far Indian publishers have not normally had much to do with discovering them and promoting their works abroad, or had the opportunity of exporting to other major English-reading markets. While we justly rejoice in the achievements of the new writers, and their publishers here celebrate the fact that good fiction is not only selling better than before but also attracting more attention, sales within the country nevertheless remain modest by international standards.

If initial printings of 3000 copies in paperback and a sale of 5000–6000 paperbacks in the first year of publication are considered spectacular successes, our ideas of best sellers and a publishing boom are really rather minor. Had say five hundred novels been selling to this extent, the range of sales, if not that of each title, would have added up to a fairly considerable total: but around 30 titles by ten a twelve authors is too small to be treated as a major publishing base, particularly when these titles are not concentrated with any single publisher but spread over several.

The trend that seems to be taking shape is certainly encouraging, but it is still embryonic and the time is far from ripe for us to conclude that the handful of new Indian novels in English has given rise to a major publishing breakthrough. For that to occur, the base will need to be much larger, more titles of worth should originate here, there must be many more proper translations, from the Indian languages (most of which probably have a larger corpus of literary works than exist in Indian English), the Indian publisher should publish for world markets, not merely for his back-garden, and better and more editors should be involved in the task of developing lists and uncovering authors. There is no sustained, outstanding creative-writing imprint in India, and, while the Writers Workshop has made an enormous contribution in keeping Indian writing in English alive, the quality of its list as a whole remains very mixed, with an average that is perhaps not very high.

If any sort of breakthrough has in fact taken place in Indian publishing, it has occurred gradually and unobtrusively over the past 25 years in scholarly and academic publishing—a phenomenon that the mass media has barely noticed despite its current interest in the publishing scene. Around 1961 it was almost impossible for a publisher in India to survive largely on scholarly books: the educational base was much smaller than now, and, apart from the paucity of publishable material, the reading public for serious books seemed apathetic and miniscule, with the debate in coffee houses and classrooms very restricted and largely focussing on ideas originating in the West.

Elements of all this are of course still with us, and we must continue to be aware of what is happening elsewhere in the world. But modern Indian scholarship in several disciplines has come of age (despite all the obstacles thrown in by our educational system), and the country's intellectual life is no longer provincial (even though frequently wrong-headed). Publishing, and in particular scholarly publishing, does not exist autonomously. It is almost wholly dependent on the quality of the intellectual community in its hinterland. With the vibrance that has developed in several academic disciplines over the past 25 years, scholarly publishing in India has been nourished enormously and the range of titles produced widened correspondingly.

As against the handful of novels published in English annually, some 2500 scholarly volumes appear each year to influence discussion and debate in a myriad fields. It is these that have made a far bigger contribution to our bookshops and to Indian publishing than the still fledgling creative–writing lists. Given the fact that books in English dominate the Indian publishing scene (yielding nearly half the total number of titles produced in the country) and that more research and academic writing is done here in English than in all the other languages put together, the contribution of scholarly writing to the Indian publishing scene is thus considerable.

We have so far been looking at the relative levels of achievement in two spheres of our publishing in English—creative and academic writing, in which the latter seems to have made a truly solid contribution. Let us now briefly look at other features of the publishing scene: apart from some 11,000 private publishers in the country, there are also around 1,000 government or semi-government institutions that publish at the central and

Ravi Dayal, formerly general manager of Oxford University Press, now runs his own publishing house called Ravi Dayal Publisher.

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state levels. They do not contribute very much to the range of titles produced in the country, but together become by far the largest publishing conglomerate in it, thanks partly to a near monopoly of the text book market provided by the state educational system.

Almost 75 per cent of the paper available for books in the country is consumed by the government in its massive involvement in publishing, but deprived them of income which could otherwise have financed more general publishing. Apart from this, by being the largest consumer of the raw materials needed for making books, the government ultimately dictates on the quality of the ingredients made available to publishers generally. Rather than insisting on making proper ingredients available, the government's tolerance of shoddiness seems to have diverted national resources into the production of sub-standard materials, thus making it almost impossible for more fastidious publishers to obtain items like good paper and binding materials at reasonable prices. Indian books thus remain amongst the worse-looking in the world and, given sharply rising costs, they are much more expensive than they should be. Paper prices have been rising in leaps and bounds these past few years, but quality remains embarrassingly bad. Add to this a wayward and often corrupt system for making library purchases, and we have a situation where Indian publishing, far from being the boom industry as it is increasingly depicted in the media, is in fact in the doldrums.

Given the enormous talent and intelligence in the country, the strength of its scholars and the potential of its creative writers, it is sad that the future of Indian publishing seems no more secure than it did at the start of the 1980s, when conditions were none too good. It is a tribute to the publishing industry's resilience and ingenuity that, despite all the obstacles in its way, it continues not only to survive much as before, but also, occasionally does something that attracts public applause. Those who applaud, however, have yet to see the mournful reality looming behind a handful of match-winning novels. Their content may be excellent, but handle the books with care: otherwise the paperback covers are liable to crack and fall apart (such being the weakness of the card available); the stitching that holds together the binding might disintegrate (such being the quality of the thread available); the glue used smells; the text itself is often difficult to read (for the paper shares the quality of blotting materials); and finally, the price of a 200 page book in paperback is increasingly in the region of Rs. 60 or more (because of the high costs of low-quality materials). Far from feeling that they are riding high, many book publishers are, in fact, complaining quite understandably, that the industry is in the throes of a crises. ❑

NEW FROM OXFORD

■ **Patanjali's Remarks on *anga*** JAMES W. BENSON

In the *Mahabhasya* Patanjali (2nd century BC) comments on Panini's rules, usually employing as a framework for his discussion the critical statements of Katyayana. The arguments and conclusions which he presents in this text constitute the basis of much of medieval grammatical literature. His remarks on Panini's use of the term *anga* suggest an interpretation of the *Astadhyayi* in which this term does not in fact play a particularly significant role. The examination of these remarks offered in this book may serve as an introduction to Panini's system of grammatical morphology.

Passages from the *Mahabhasya* and later grammatical treatises are quoted and translated.

Dr James W. Benson is Assistant Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University.

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■ **Small Short and Unsecured**

Informal Rural Finance in India F.J.A. BOUMAN

This book discusses the performance of a number of financial agents in semi-arid Sangli, a district in Maharashtra. Since the 1950s, public and private investment in irrigation, sugar factories and cane cultivation have stimulated a local sugar boom in Sangli, followed by a minor diary boom in the 1970s. Credit from banks and co-operatives was available to help farmers profit from these booms. Professor Bouman's main focus of interest is, however, on informal financial intermediaries or agents such as moneylenders, pawnbrokers, milk collectors and several types of local self-help savings and credit associations that have increased dramatically in numbers in recent years. Professor Bouman argues that deficiencies in the services of the formal sector have stimulated the appeal and activities of informal finance agents, who proved better motivated and equipped to deal with the special demands of low income rural households in a mini-economy. Contrary to popular opinion, the informal sector acted as a catalyst and assisted small scale borrowers to participate in the development boom in a formerly stagnant economic environment.

Frits J. A. Bouman lectured on agricultural credit and co-operatives at the Agricultural University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. He was born in Indonesia and took his professional training as a sociologist at the University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. From 1958 he has worked in several capacities in African and Asian countries. His main research and publications are in the field of informal credit markets. In 1988 he retired from Wageningen University.

156 pp. *Demy 8vo* *1989* *Rs 120* *SBN 0 19 562454 8*

■ **Origins of the Gandharan Style** LOLITA NEHRU

The origins of the Gandharan style have long been debated and divergent views have been expressed. More recently, the results of a series of excavations in northern Pakistan, Afganistan, Soviet Central Asia and Iran have been calling for a review of the subject.

The present study follows three broad structural themes. The first theme involves a systematic analysis of the extent to which the Gandharan sculptures drew upon other traditions (those of the Graeco-Roman world, Bactria, Parthia and India) and the nature of the intermingling of these traditions within the body of Gandharan sculpture. The second theme dwells on the wider issue of the Hellenization of the east which followed upon the conquests of Alexander, and the simultaneous working of distinct local or regional tendencies which led to the creation of the wide range of stylistic expressions which appeared between the Euphrates and the valleys of northern India. The third theme of the book focuses on the process of stylistic change which led to the eventual formulation of the Gandharan style.

Dr Lolita Nehru is an art historian, her area of specialization being the history of early Indian art from the third century A.D. At present she is an Associate Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Pages 180 + 72 pages of plates *Rs 700* *Demy 4to* *1989* *SBN 0 19 562472 6*

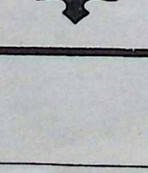
■ **The Formation of the Mughal Empire** DOUGLAS E. STREUSAND

This book, The Formation of the Mughal Empire, establishes links missing in the literature that has hitherto been available. It connects up several things—the process of the Mughal empire's expansion, Akbar's political and administrative initiatives, and the rituals of the Mughal court—to explain the fundamental characteristics of the Mughal polity. Dr Streusand also places Mughal institutions and practices within their political and cultural contexts to explain how the Mughal ruling class coalesced from heterogeneous groups which retained their own identities. He provides explanations for the persistence of zamindars in the Mughal empire, the peculiar nature of the status of the mansabdar, and the apparent Mughal failure to enforce many of the regulations which applied to mansabdars. By emphasizing the distinction between the image of the Mughal political structure in court rituals at the centre, and the reality of the situationin the provinces, Dr Streusand explains how centralized the Mughal empire was—or was not.

The author's frequent comparisons of Mughal material with other materials and histories, particularly those that pertain to the Ottoman empire, his original analysis of Mughal military superiority, and his unique decoding of Mughal court rituals—all make this book of interest to scholars of the medieval world generally. It is likely to prove an indispensable book for students of medieval India.

Douglas E. Streusand received his bachelor's degree in histroy from Duke University, and his master's and Ph.D. degrees in Islamic History from the University of Chicago.

Pages 216 *Rs 175* *Demy 8vo* *1989* *SBN 0 19 562490 4*



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EVALUATING THE PINE PROJECT IN BASTAR

Ranjit Singh

HOUR OF THE FOX
Tropical Forests, the World Bank and Indigenous People in Central India

by R.S. Anderson and W. Huber

Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 158, Rs. 130.00

Notwithstanding the subtitle, this book is devoted almost entirely to Bastar, and mainly to the pine project in that district. Not that such circumscription is necessarily a detraction from the merits of this work. Indeed, the simplistic application of "development" needs and norms by urban planners to tribal communities without taking into cognizance the psyche, ethos and priorities of the latter, sometimes in the garb of "tribal upliftment" under the pretext of the classical Rousseau doctrine of forcing the noble savage to be free without as much as consulting the potential beneficiaries, and very often under the overall excuse of national interest if direct tangible benefits to the tribals cannot be proved, is not an uncommon phenomenon. And the World Bank, United Nations and other aid-giving agencies have encouraged and assisted such efforts. We have to thank the authors, therefore, for publishing an account of one such endeavour which had attracted so much attention and controversy a decade ago and hope that lessons would be learnt from this analysis which would prevent such mistakes in the future.

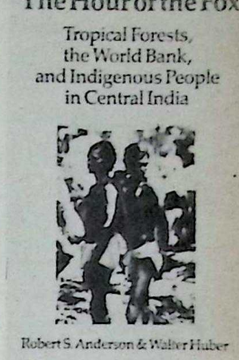
It is thus dismaying to discover at the end of the narrative that this very important subject matter has not been comprehensively and convincingly dealt with. The errors are not merely in nomenclature, which can be attributed to the expatriate authors not being familiar with the local language and names—'Parhat' instead of 'Paradh' (ritual hunt); 'Kangar' instead of 'Kanger' reserved forest; 'bhumidari' and 'bhumiswami' in place of 'bhumidhari' and 'bhumiswami's rights, and Dahlvi instead of Dalvi as the name of the Inspector General of Forests. Nor are the deficiencies confined only to a few factual errors, such as the statement that the Forest Development Corporation was created in Madhya Pradesh for World Bank investment, when such corporations have been created in all states as a matter of an earlier policy, irrespective of any externally aided projects; or to say that the collector, though a civil servant, has in "many respects the most powerful political position", when in fact he is the administrative head of a district.

The book is essentially on a forestry project and though there is some very interesting and pertinent data pertaining to forests in Bastar and elsewhere, the lack of basic forest and ecological know-how does become evident. The forest types in Bastar are tropical dry deciduous and tropical moist deciduous forests, which are very significantly different in species, composition and overall nature from the tropical evergreen forests that the authors draw comparisons with the cite reference to.

It is suggested that many native pines, for instance the 'chir' pine, might have been suitable for Bastar. No indigenous pine would have been quick-growing, which was what was required under the project. Most Himalayan pine would have been unsuitable for Bastar, including the 'Chir' pine (*Pinus roxburghii*), and all pines including the non-Himalayan pines such as *Pinus-khasia* which are native to India, would still have been exotic to Bastar where there is no indigenous pine and, what is more important, all pines would have been as useless to the tribals as the Caribbean pine (*Pinus-caribaea*) which was chosen to be grown under the project. In fact, the authors have failed to note that one of the reasons why the pine was chosen was that it could neither be useful as a fodder or a fruit-bearing tree, and very little as fuel wood—the same as eucalyptus—and would hence have been free from exploitation. It is indeed a sad commentary on the state of preservation of our forests that only those species of plants have a hope for survival that are relatively useless to the local human population and livestock.

Another very significant argument against the pine project, which finds no mention in the book is why good, existing high forests, indeed some of the best sal forests in Bastar, had to be supplanted for the sake of this project, and why the pine could not have been grown on suitable soil on which existing forest had already been denuded. True, the rate of growth of the pine would not have been as good on such lands, but more area of treeless growth could have been taken—there was no dearth of it—to ensure an adequate supply of wood for the paper industry. The trees that would have been grown would then have been an additionality to the existing forest bio mass and not a substitution for it and, what is more, it would not have destroyed trees on which the tribals depended for their livelihood, sal most of all.

However, it is in the field of anthropology that there are some of the most inexplicable errors and which is indeed very surprising, considering the educational qualifications and experience of the authors. Forest inhabitants are described as mainly hunters. In reality they are hunter-gatherers, and with the destruction of the fauna the world over, they are predominantly gatherers, especially in Bastar where the tribals have years ago decimated the fauna more than anywhere else in peninsular Indian forests.



The tribes of Bastar are categorised as those that are "least Hinduised", "most Hinduised" and those in between. What is the dividing line between a Hindu and a tribal? Are the qualifying parameters based on culture, ethnology, pantheon or whatever, and if it is a potpourri of all those and more, what weightage is given to each of the various criteria? Can the wearing of non-tribal clothes, going to school or living in non-traditional houses be deemed as being Hinduised? Many tribals who do this or even live in towns still continue to worship their traditional deities. Are they Hinduised? The authors go on to add that most of the castes have been made up of tribal people "who have taken to Hindu occupations." What are Hindu occupations as different from Muslim or Christian occupation, or tribal occupations for that matter?

The greatest lacuna in the book, however, is that it does not analyse to any depth the long term impact that the pine project would have had on the economy and the way of life of the tribals, and upon the ecology and productivity of the forests of Bastar, especially if the project had succeeded. This, indeed, would have been a most revealing expose and would have had an impact upon other similar projects, some in the 'pipeline', elsewhere in the world.

At the same time, there are many aspects which are very candidly and incisively dealt with. The viewing of Bastar as a prospective "Ruhr of the East" for purposes of exploitation; of the attitude that many foresters have towards forests as primarily being a resource to be mined; the various nuances involved in the World Bank Bastar Technical Assistance Project (TAP) document and the market trends in wood; the various deliberations that occurred following the unleashing of the controversy; the events leading to the death of Maharaja Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo of Bastar, all make very engrossing and rewarding reading. The book should be read by all those the world over, planners and as well as executives, of projects on sensitive sites which directly or indirectly affect the lives and livelihood of subsistence-living tradition-bound societies. Some of the worst atrocities committed on these communities, either through acts of commission or omission, have been by 'Welfare States' and the fact that these wrongs were never intended is no solace to those who have been displaced, disrupted or culturally devastated. ❑

Dr Ranjit Singh is an IAS officer and a world wildlife expert.

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- The new Government has also announced that the mid-day meal scheme would be strengthened and made more effective.
- It has been decided to give land to State Government Employees at concessional rate.
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- The Cabinet has also announced the formation of a Gopalak Vikas Board for the uplift of rabari and bharwad Communities.

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ON WOMEN TALKING

Mrinal Pande

INDIAN WOMEN: AN INNER DIALOGUE

By Indira J. Parikh andPulin K. Garg

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 224, Hardcover Rs. 175.00, Paper back Rs. 75.00

Speech, said the fox to the Brahmin in the *Mahabharata,* is what separates humans from animals. Within the human society, speech is not just a means of self-expression and sharing of thoughts, it also becomes an important marker of social boundaries. Attitudes to speech and speaker are closely related and views about the inadequacies of one are often transformed into self-fulfilling prophecies concerning the other. A study of human speech can thus open many doors into the complex maze known as the human psyche.

One of the effects of negativity assigned to woman is the general asymmetry between male and female involvement in conversation and communication. Women usually yield to interruptions by men, take on the role of a listener and generally speak much less than the prevailing stereotype would have us believe. The preface to *Indian women: An Inner Dialogue,* therefore, makes a refreshing beginning in the direction of promising to bring to us an articulation of the inner dialogue that women conduct within themselves; an exercise where "the participants had to relive the feelings of harshness and softness, of rejection and affirmation, of shame and guilt on the one hand, and the joy and excitement on the other."

From this view point, the two personal statements by the authors at the beginning of the book, make the most absorbing reading. They are, what the preface promises, frank, simple and readable probings by two sensitive individuals, of their own inner senses. What follows however in the next eight chapters is a dry, clinical and dehumanized academic *interpretation* of what the actual dialogues these women must have had with the two researchers. The chapters are totally lacking in the warmth, the naivete and the immediacy that the actual first-hand accounts must have had, because the authors instead of quoting the women, go on to 'interpret' them. What we have eventually in place of conversation is a deliberate controlling and channelising of the readers' attention towards a "horizon where, we (the authors) believe, exists a space in which they (women) can invoke the spirit of their human existence and bring to themselves and to the world the wisdom of the sages, the energy, for an evergreen life, and the capability to create harmony between the heart, the soul and the living process."

Generalizations that make chapterization easy but also trivialize and dehumanize research are an ever-present temptation to academicians, especially when they are dealing with a hitherto only vaguely and often romantically defined area such as a woman's inner-landscape. This happens in the book again and again. One major generalization that the authors fall prey to, lays great stress on "the socialization process", which is seen as being the formative principle of women's ultimate self-image. This in simple terms seems to imply that women are socially constructed by men and women who themselves have been put together in the same way.

To a certain extent, this is a very persuasive picture. All societies have specific ways of rearing children and from this it is easy to conclude that those practices mould the children; and that given the male-centric biases of our society, whenever a female child is socialized, she is in no position to resist. "Society", say the authors, "thus fragmented the being and becoming of men and women in the name of social order. It left out half of its population carrying the load . . . ." etc. etc. (Chapt. 3) But is the situation really so passive and one dimensional? Is it not underplaying the various instances of active resistance by individuals, when faced with oppression? What follows from this cool cartographical exercise in 'marking'–areas is what the authors label as 'The Emotive Map of the Family', and 'The Congnitive Map of the Family'. Families, the authors again seem to overlook, like individuals, are strange amorphous entities, that function at many (often mutually-contradictory) levels. When we actually look at the reality of socialization process within Indian families, where do we find such passivity as the authors imply? Children, even female children, do not automatically internalize parents' expectations. If they did, there would be no way in which we could account for the conflicts in their personal and social lives that the further chapters go on to describe. The layer upon layer of social manipulations, individual rebellions and adjustments that we see in individual cases all around us, do not find a place in these chapters.

Instead, hidden behind generalizations such as the book presents, there is a powerful normative (and perhaps ideological) commitment to the vision of a 'normal human being; and the normal, one suspects, is the status quo. Proof of this is, that women challenging the status-quo are either seen to be somewhat misguided . . . ."–struggling for their freedom, autonomy and acceptance of their self-worth, many women turn idealistic. . . . they talk of uplifting women . . . (and) accept the role of contributing to a redefinition of the system . . . . However, the mammoth social system and the . . . structures of bondage continue to prevail . . . ." (Chapt.VII "Beyond the Horizon"). In some other cases, rebels, instead of being analysed, are romanticized into a premature and verbose sainthood, that defies logic and coherence of thought:

. . . . How does such a woman experience herself . . .? She experiences and owns her qualities of magic, of mystery and is fearful of her powers . . . . By her energy she invokes pulsating life and melts the frozen spirit, lives through excruciating pain to enliven the numbness and breathes life into her being and that of others and into the system . . . She has created her space and is re-born. (Chapter VIII *Final Encounter with Self)*

Neither the oppression, nor the liberation of women—or indeed all out-groups, can be conceptualized in flat abstract terms. In our world, the oppressor and oppressed confront each other in 'concrete' situations. The remarks that they make about their lives are not mere rhetorical devices but comments made by one real person about another and must be seen as such. By leaving out all such concrete evidence what the learned authors have been left with are mere eviscerated abstractions which fail to reveal how human beings in specific contexts can and do oppress each other, how a sexist parent or a teacher is also often an active agent in the reproduction of a particular ideology and how in receiving a sexist gesture or a remark, the subject reacts to it first not as a representative of an opressed group, but as an individual with a name and an identity of her own.

The authors also overlook the fact, that to the extent our society is constructed on casteist and sexist lines, men, specially caste men, can and do accrue advantages which are denied to others. Resistance to oppression is such a crucial component of historical and social processes that it makes no sense to strip it of these dimensions and talk about the defeat of human agency or struggle only. Then again, the argument that women are often seduced into their role by an engineering of their consent by the society, seems to avoid looking at the nakedness of power and social control. This in no way is proof of the ultimate passivity or defeat of women. It is for this reason that one wishes that in discussing domination and oppression, the commentators had not denied the oppressed their unique subjectivity. The battle for the control of the personal is not preordained, nor are men always the guaranteed victors. How the actual battle lines are drawn, organized and reorganized within the minds of the protagonists is ultimately what inner dialogues are all about. The book hints at this, but just about. ❑

Mrinal Pande is the editor of the Hindi weekly, Saptahik Hindustan.

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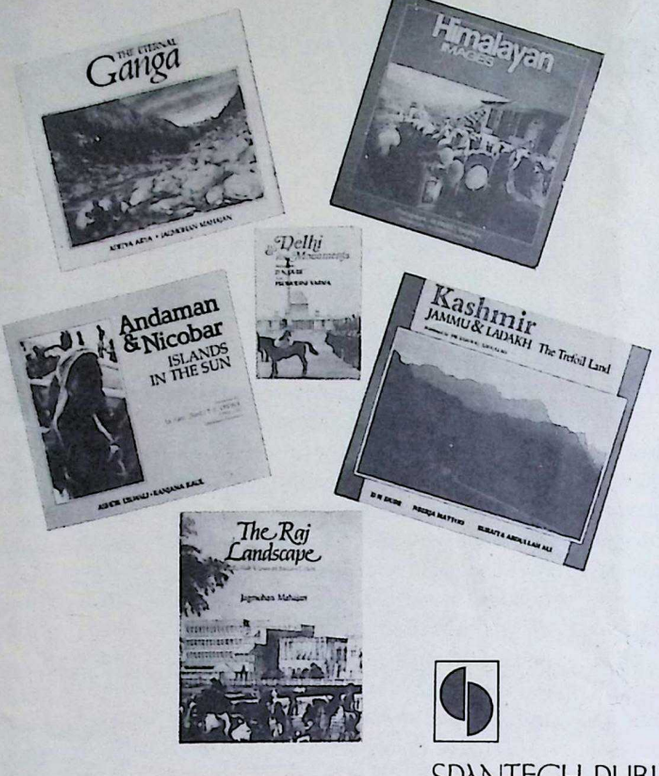

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ANDREI SAKHAROV

Embodiment of Spiritual Force

Sumit Chakravartty

She was a young lady and spoke softly in chaste Russian. One could sense her total dedication to the cause she espoused. She told me she was collecting signatures for deletion of Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, a demand raised by Dr Andrei Sakharov, the world famous nuclear physicist and tireless crusader for human rights in the USSR.

It was summer in Moscow—hot and dry—the summer of 1989. The place was old Arbat near Metro Smolenskaya and just behind the USSR Foreign Ministry building.

The young lady's face remains etched in my mind. She sported a badge on which was written the word: "Memorial". Yes, she said, she belonged to the Memorial Committee which had launched the signature campaign. The Memorial Committee's task was to organise the erection of a memorial in honour of the victims of Stalinist repression.

I took down the address of the office of the Memorial Committee. The next day I was at the office of the Committee with a letter from a veteran Indian Communist leader, Gopendra Krishna Chakraborty residing in Moscow requesting the Committee to insert in the proposed memorial the names of two noted Indian Communist freedom fighters—Abani Mukherjee and Virendranath Chattopadhyay—who had disappeared in the Soviet Union at the height of Stalin's purges in the late thirties: they were later killed along with countless other innocent people.

Sumit Chakravartty is a journalist and a special correspondent of Mainstream Weekly.

Today the existence of non-official institutions like the Memorial Committee shows the level to which the struggle against Stalinist crimes has been raised in the Soviet Union. A sizeable section of the protagonists of that struggle are keen to delete Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution that grants the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) monopoly of power by describing it as the "leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system". In this struggle as also the general movement against every form of repression and for democratic reforms the radical elements in the Soviet land—like the young lady I had met in Arbat—draw immense sustenance and inspiration from Sakharov.

Indeed just before he passed away in his Moscow flat on Ulitsa Chkalova (a part of the Soviet Capital's ring road called 'Sadovoye Koltso' or Garden Ring) on December 14, 1989, Sakharov's major political act was to call a two-hour general strike to pressurise the Congress of Soviet People's Deputies to debate the issue of deletion of Article 6. This too provided a testimony of both his stature and courage.

Born on May 21, 1921 in Moscow in the family of a physics professor he studied for four years in the Moscow State University named after Lomonosov and in 1942 was sent not to the warfront but to an arms factory where he had already contributed to many inventions. Soon after the Second World War he joined the Lebedev Physics Institute as a research worker. In 1950 he along with Igor Tamm, the winner of the 1958 Nobel Prize for Physics (who guided him in his research) devised a method of controlled thermonuclear reaction which was a breakthrough in thermonuclear research. When Sakharov was only 32 years old, the USSR exploded for the first time—in August 1953—its hydrogen bomb. Thereafter the young Sakharov was elected to the USSR Academy of Sciences without having to become first a member-correspondent as is the normal practice. Thus Sakharov is indeed the "father of the Russian hydrogen bomb", the title the West conferred on him. But he all along shunned the title for he had matured in a brief span of time into a different type of personality tormented as he was *a la* Oppenheimer, of the immorality behind the development of nuclear arms.

Stories are rife in the Western press of his serious differences with Nikita Khrushchev (when the latter was the supreme leader in the USSR) on the issue of resumption of nuclear tests. Yes, there were disagreements between the two. Yet, what is not much known is the respect and regard Khrushchev had for Sakharov that is revealed sharply in *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*.

It is well worth quoting the Soviet leader at length on the subject. Characterising Academician Sakharov as one of "our most brilliant nuclear physicists", Khrushchev drew an analogy with Academician Pyotr Kapitsa, the world famous Soviet physicist (who was opposed to working on military projects) and noted:

> He (Sakharov) also had misgivings about military research. I used to meet frequently with Sakharov, and I considered him an extremely talented and impressive man. He was also a surprisingly young man to be involved in such important and difficult matters. He proposed that we develop a hydrogen bomb. No one else, neither the Americans nor the English, had such a bomb. I was overwhelmed by the idea. We did everything in our power to assure the

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rapid realisation of Sakharov's plans. With the help of engineers, technicians and workers, our industry was able to develop the bomb in a remarkably short time. The hydrogen bomb represented a great contribution to the Soviet people and a great act of patriotism by Comrade Sakharov.

Khrushchev thereafter dwelt on the US-USSR negotiations for an agreement to halt the nuclear arms race and referred to the Soviet decision not to continue nuclear explosions during the period of negotiations while the "Americans went right on testing, perfecting and stockpiling their own bombs . . . . deaf to all protests". In the light of the US behaviour the Soviet leadership decided to resume testing in October 1958. In that backdrop Khrushchev wrote:

> Literally a day or two before the resumption of our testing programme, I got a telephone call from Academician Sakharov. He addressed me in my capacity as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and he said he had a petition to present. The petition called on our government to cancel the scheduled nuclear explosion and not to engage in any further testing, at least not of the hydrogen bomb: "As a scientist and as the designer of the hydrogen bomb, I know what harm these explosions can bring down on the head of mankind."
>
> Sakharov went on in that vein, pleading with me not to allow our military to conduct any further tests. He was obviously guided by moral and humanistic considerations. I knew him and was profoundly impressed by him. Everyone was. He was, as they say, a crystal of morality among our scientists. I'm sure he had none but the best of motives. He was devoted to the idea that science should bring peace and prosperity to the world, that it should help preserve and improve the conditions for human life. He hated the thought that science might be used to destroy life, to contaminate the atmosphere, to kill people slowly by radioactive poisoning. However, he went too far in thinking that he had a right to decide whether the bomb he had developed could ever be used in the future.
>
> "Comrade Sakharov", I said, "you must understand my position. My responsibilities in the post I hold do not allow me to cancel the tests. Our Party and government have already made it abundantly clear that we would like nothing better than to suspend nuclear testing forever. Our leadership has already unilaterally discontinued nuclear testing and called on the United States and other countries to follow our example for the good of all mankind. But we got no answer. The Americans would not listen to our proposals. As a scientist surely you know that they've gone right on conducting their tests. If we don't test our own bombs, how will we know whether they work or not?"
>
> He wasn't satisfied. He still insisted that we not resume our own testing.
>
> I wanted to be absolutely frank with him: "Comrade Sakharov, believe me, I deeply sympathise with your point of view. But as the man responsible for the security of our country, I have no right to do what you're asking. For me to cancel the tests would be a crime against our state. I'm sure you know what kind of suffering was inflicted on our people during World War II. We can't risk the lives of our people again by giving our adversary a free hand and to develop new means of destruction. Can't you understand that? To agree to what you are suggesting would spell doom for our country. Please understand that I simply cannot accept your plea; we must continue our tests."
>
> My arguments didn't change his mind, and his didn't change mine ; . . . This conflict between Sakharov and me left a lasting imprint on us both. I took it as evidence that he didn't fully understand what was in the best interests of the state, and therefore from that moment on I was somewhat on my guard with him. I hope that the time will come when Comrade Sakharov will see the correctness of my position—if not now, then some time in the future."

Khrushchev did not live to witness the sea-change brought about in the Soviet political scene today. But the fact is that even when Khrushchev and Sakharov stood by their respective convictions there was mutual regard for each other punctuated by the spirit of tolerance that the Soviet leader displayed in a considerable measure. Despite the contradictory steps that he took at times, the personality who opened the USSR to the whole world making a big hole in the Iron Curtain of Stalin's days had the capacity to engage in self-introspection and even self-criticism. Thus while speaking about Academician Kapitsa he narrated the circumstances in which he had to turn down the Soviet scientist's request to go abroad, and made the following confession: "I have to admit that another reason I refused Kapitsa permission (to travel abroad) was possibly that Stalin was still belching inside me. Keep in mind, I'd worked under Stalin for years and years, and you don't free yourself from (Stalinist) habits so easily. It takes time to become conscious of your shortcomings and free yourself from them." (*Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, p.67)

There is, therefore, no guarantee that Khrushchev would not have changed his attitude on the subject in which he had disagreement with Sakharov. In any case it is difficult to envisage Khrushchev adopting the measures that his successors took to stifle Sakharov's voice, the voice of freedom. At least there is nothing to suggest from his account of the encounter with Sakharov that Khrushchev would have sunk to the depths that Brezhnev and his cohorts sunk in their bid to suppress dissent.

In a statement published in the *New York Times* on September 12, 1973, Sakharov wrote: "Beginning in 1958 I have spoken out both in print and in private for ending nuclear tests in the atmosphere." In a collection of writings published in the West in 1974 under the title *Sakharov Speaks*, Sakharov gave a detailed account of his dealings with Khrushchev. While his disagreement with the Soviet leader (not only on the issue of banning nuclear weapons tests but also on educational reforms) come out in bold relief, there is an underlying element of mutual respect in those encounters. At a later stage, especially after Gorbachev telephoned him at his home in exile in Gorky in December 1986 and set him free in the wake of *glasnost* (openness) accompanying *perestroika* (restructuring), Sakharov and Gorbachev developed far greater mutual respect for each other. One reason for this was that, unlike Khrushchev, Gorbachev's hands were never soiled by his association with Stalin.

Sakharov's row with Khrushchev notwithstanding, the Soviet scientist persisted in his efforts to ban the tests. His endeavours on this score did not go in vain. In 1963 was signed the Treaty of Moscow prohibiting nuclear experiments in the atmosphere and the sea.

Yes, Khrushchev was right. Through the bitter experience and rare foresight Sakharov, the ardent patriot, had become a pacifist and thus a real internationalist. Gorbachev's concept of an interdependent world was manifest first in his immortal ideas.

Following the ouster of Khrushchev by the neo-Stalinists group, guided by Mikhail Suslov and with Leonid Brezhnev at the helm, put a brake on the process of "de-Stalinisation" initiated by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. That development compelled Sakharov to come out vociferously in favour of freedom in the USSR, an act of great courage and defiance for which he had to suffer. He bore the suffering stoically and even as his health deteriorated his spirit remained undaunted.

In 1964 he defended the genetic thesis of Gregor Mendel against the one of T.D. Lysenko, who was lionised under Stalin. In 1966 he demanded along with 24 other scientist and artists more "de-Stalinisation". This took place on the eve of the twenty-third Congress of the CPSU. They sounded a note of caution and warning: "The people would never understand or accept restoration of Stalin to a place of honour." In a large measure the warning fell on deaf ears. Nevertheless, the Brezhnev-Suslov group was prevented from going the whole hog in fully restoring Stalin. Thereafter Sakharov intervened in favour of four imprisoned "free thinkers" (he was not happy with the term 'dissident'). Next came his intervention in defence of writers Daniel and Sinyavski who were subjected to persecution and trial.

In the summer of 1968 Sakharov took another defiant stand. This was the time when the Soviet army was engaged in preparations to invade Czechoslovakia. Sakharov wrote a brilliant 10,000 word treatise *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom*, taking a long range view at the perils confronting the world—"War, hunger, environmental pollution, stultifying mass culture and demagogic myths". He demanded a final rupture

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with Stalinism alongside respect for human rights. He indicted the Soviet system as it had grown since Stalin in unambiguous terms eloquently denouncing censorship that "killed the living soul" of literature; restraints on debate; intellectual inquiry; arrest, and, under Stalin murder of intellectuals.

Published in the *New York Times*, which could lay its hands on the document through dissident channels, the treatise was broadcast back into the USSR by the Western radio services. And with profound effect. The Kremlin officials mounted pressure on Gorbachev to sign an already prepared article, to have been published in the government newspaper *Izvestia*, describing the treatise as a fabrication. Sakharov refused. He knew he had to pay a heavy price in terms of the consequences. But he did not budge. In 1970 he set up with physicists Andrei Tverdokhlebore and Valery Chalidze a 'Committee for the Defence of Human Rights'. Later he launched several hunger strikes in a bid to highlight the demands of the political prisoners in the USSR. These affected his health and cut short his life. But he did not relent.

In 1975 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (the citation hailing him as a "spokesman for the conscience of mankind which the world sorely needs today"), but the Soviet authorities' opposition prevented him from travelling to Oslo to receive the prize. Instead his wife, who was at that time in Italy for eye care, went to Norway for the purpose of receiving it on his behalf. In the true Brezhnev style, *Tass* branded him then as a "traitor" to the Soviet cause.

In the wake of such vituperative abuses Sakharov did not lose his bearing. He never caved in to pressure, never gave up his convictions. He was not a Marxist, nor a party member. He had seen Stalinist repression from close quarters, his uncle Nicolas Vavilov, the well known geneticist, having perished in one of Stalin's countless concentration camps. And it was thus natural for him to become a crusader against Stalinist barbarity. But while doing so he never allowed himself to go to the other extreme. He always argued in favour of a "spirit of tolerance" in the USSR.

In his book *My Country and the World*, he analysed the ailment of his country as he understood: "State capitalism. . . . of the complete nationalisation of the economy, of the absolute hold of the party and the government" on the basic areas of life. But he did not want to destroy the system, he wanted to change it. While defending Alexander Solzhenitsyn facing persecution from the authorities, he denounced the author of *Gulag Archipalego* for his "attachment to the past" and pandering to the "Slavophile spirit" that, he believed, was the "greatest of misfortunes" of the nation as a whole. Instead, he wanted restoration of full-blooded democracy since the "democratic path was the best for whichever country it may be". This was a complete, rational human being upholding the best values of his country and staying to reform an order that had turned repressive over the years despite half-hearted de-Stalinisation.

Once, when his interview was not promptly published in full in the *New York Times*, he had no hesitation in withdrawing it as he did not want his words to be distorted by the journalist concerned. "I am an unusual person. I am not just an American movie star," he said bluntly. This independent attitude of Sakharov the Soviet media under Brezhnev failed to either understand or appreciate.

The Brezhnev regime's sharpest condemnation of Sakharov came when he stood upright to trenchantly criticise the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. He was placed under house arrest in Gorky and all his privileges as the country's foremost scientist curtailed. He was even beaten up by unknown assailants in Gorky. It was left to the enlightened leadership of Gorbachev to make suitable amends for the injustice done to Sakharov. He was rehabilitated in full glory after the onset of *perestroika* and elected to the Congress of People's Deputies in April 1989.

At the first Congress of People's Deputies last June Sakharov made history by describing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as a "disgrace and a sin". He was jeered by the conservative elements still occupying prominent positions. They charged him with tainting the image of the army. But the radical elements, pledged to reinforce the struggle for genuine *perestroika*, rallied to his defence. It was a clash of "two worlds" as *Moscow News* put it. But it also underscored the openness characterising the Soviet society today. Noted radical economist, Gavriil Popov, in his moving tribute to Sakharov said:

> Although Andrei Sakharov's scientific activities were immense and brought him into politics, it is precisely as a public figure that he has become man of the century. He came to symbolise the compromise between socialism, with the giant task of *perestroika*, and capitalism, considerably modified in the process of gigantic reform. This is not accidental. The creator of weapons most horrible for the destinies of humankind had to become the herald of the new thinking.
>
> Sakharov occupied the key position not only in the world-historic process, but also in our *perestroika*, his deepest commitment to the idea of human rights as a prime value, the idea of democracy as the only real guarantee of human freedom predetermined Sakharov's relevance for *perestroika*, pivoted on the problem of political democracy as the basis and condition of economic *perestroika*.
>
> Finally, Andrei Sakharov became a symbol of our nascent parliamentarianism.
>
> Years will pass by. We shall live under normal democracy. But we shall always remember how this man, prematurely aged by Soviet exile, his health wrecked by protest hunger strikes and forced nourishment, how this hunched and exceptionally proud man, paying no attention to anything or anyone, rose to his feet to start the unofficial queue at the rostrum of the Congress. He fought to prevent the Congress of People's Deputies being turned into something spearheaded against the people, into an apparent spectacle with concessions to the spirit of the times. He fought for the right of any deputy to come to the rostrum—without a text already examined, even without agreement on who was to speak.
>
> Andrei Sakharov took a step into history. Our task is to continue his cause.

Gorbachev, like Khrushchev, did not agree with Sakharov on many issues. One was the question of deleting Article 6 from the Soviet Constitution. Concerned over the state of affairs in the USSR, Sakharov told the meeting of the Inter-Regional Group of People's Deputies—the unofficial opposition in the Soviet Union—that there was a "deep going crisis of confidence in the Party and the leadership" that could be ended only through "resolute steps". In his view, "the abolition of Article 6 of the constitution and other related articles in it would be the most important political act today–not a year from now, after the work on a new text of the constitution has been completed. This will be too late, we should receive and make *perestroika* work now."

Obviously Gorbachev could not countenance such opinions. And yet what he said about Sakharov after his death was no less moving than Popov's tribute. "I feel the tragedy with my whole heart, and it pains me deeply. The memory of Andrei Dimitrievich Sakharov will be cherished forever in our history. Andrei Dimitrievich was a man of great compassion and equally responsible. Having suffered himself, he undertook to care for others. . . . I always respected him as an open, direct and sincere person. Even when I disagreed with him, I always remembered his sincerity which is why people respected him."

The befitting homage by the CPSU leadership to Sakharov is also testimony of the Soviet leaders' recognition of the Soviet scientist's contribution to the upliftment of the country and society through his deeds. Sakharov, the talented nuclear physicist and crusader for civil liberties, gradually emerged as the voice of freedom in the USSR. What is more, he became the embodiment of the moral and spiritual force of Soviet life in the second half of the twentieth century no less in magnitude than that represented by Leo Tolstoy in the last century. No wonder, several newspapers have rated him equal in measure to Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

The best tribute to Sakharov in practical terms would of course be in the further advancement of the struggle for the betterment of human conditions in the USSR through the instrument of *perestroika*. The countless men and women who joined his funeral on December 18, 1989 have pledged to carry out that task whose impact on the world would be doubtless phenomenal. There is no going back for them. ❑

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A BLIND MAN'S ELEPHANT

T.C.A. Ramanuja Chari

LAW AND SOCIETY IN MODERN INDIA

Edited by Marc Galanter with an Introduction by Rajeev Dhavan

Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 329, Rs. 250.

A book from Marc Galanter is always welcome. So is this. But not for the reason that it is a coherent or even cogent description and analysis of the chosen subject. It could not be that because it is only a collection of essays written over a period of two decades for presentation to a specific audience and therefore, has a limited purpose.

The chosen subject is Law and Society in modern India. Modern India is a developing country faced with a population explosion, fast rate of urbanisation, a changing social structure, values and norms and limited resource. It has a fast-expanding industrial base and a rapidly increasing demand for goods and services which generally outstrips, at any given point of time, the capacity to cope with that demand. The expectation that this book would describe the social or public interests, rights, duties and obligations which mark the society of modern India and how far, and with what efficiency, Law takes care of these is not fulfilled. Instead, the essays represent rather a weak and superficial attempt to set out what Galanter calls the "expropriation of Law" (p. 17).

Galanter uses this expression in his essay on the displacement of traditional law in India. This raises, but only to disappoint, expectations of a rich fare about a description of the juridical categories and concepts of what is called the traditional law of India and how these were displaced. Proof of the thesis of displacement or expropriation depends on demonstration of certain other premises.

One such is that the categories and concepts of the traditional Law of India were essentially different from and incompatible with the new legal orders. Demonstration of that premise will be acceptable only when it is shown further that Law understood as a function of social relations and interaction, did not develop—and would not have developed in India into substantially what it is out of its own native roots. Proof of this proposition is extremely difficult because human experience, needs, demands and responses are substantially the same though not identical.

Besides, the content of Law, that is the aggregate of precepts for social control, regulation and development, is determined by the operative inventory—political, economic social and cultural—for the time being. The Corpus Juris of India progressed, over the millennia, from its simple beginning into more and more complex content as wave after wave of migrants of different ethnic roots made India their home and enriched its inventory.

This panorama is vast and capsuling it is difficult without an intimate knowledge and understanding of the traditional Indian scholarship of all hues. Galanter did not, apparently, have the time to acquire this knowledge nor does he seem to have sought the guidance of the living repositories of that knowledge. For, if he had at least sought such guidance he would have learnt that for instance, the concept of "Dharma" is protean and has a secular aspect as well which is determined by contemporaneous factors (*Kala Desa Vartamanam*, the temporal and the spatial).

Thus, the themes of displacement of traditional law and the alleged aborted restoration of the "indigenous law" are myopic. Because, these do not give due credit to the fact that the bundle of interests, rights, duties, obligations, whether public or individual, had not remained the same over the ages. These have changed with the level of growth, development, and diversification of the population of India and inter se interaction. Law also changed, by custom or legislation, with the new situations, to combat socially patterned evils and inadequacies and to regulate interests, rights, duties, liabilities, remedies, relief against and compensation for injury in respect of status and contractual relations. Such change is certainly not displacement.

The word "modern" means to Galanter "the cluster of features which characterise, to a greater or lesser extent, the legal systems of industrial societies of the past century" (p. 15). The choice of the legal systems of the industrial societies of the nineteenth century as the measure of comparison in relation to Indian legal system is unfortunate and thoughtless. Apart from being patronising and a subtle yet insensitive reassertion of the disputable claim of superiority of western ideology and thought, the chosen yardstick leaves no room for accommodating the qualitative differences between the ground conditions in India and the industrial societies of the last century.

The latter were in the process of transforming their legal systems to suit and cope with the fundamental changes in conditions. The Indian situation was altogether different. Different peoples with different cultures and heritages had made India their homes over the ages. Indian genius was striving to find new levels of mutual adjustment in all fields including the legal order. The advent of the British brought about a qualitative change in conditions and the legal system had to cope with the new situation. This was done by legislation but in a minimal measure, whether in the field of contractual relations or property rights or personal law or the laws relating to jurisdiction of courts and their procedures.

Galanter does not ask the question whether the so-called new system, which according to him is foreign, could have worked if it was totally alien in concept and design or if it was not substantially codification of common sense precepts that were already operative in some form or another. Asserting the contrary, by reference to the system of dispute settlement, is due, perhaps, to his not seeking the guidance of the traditional scholarship of India. If he had done that he would have known, for example, that the Vedas visualise the King as a judge and that others could undertake judicial dutues as *Madhya Masihiva*, arbitrator. He would have also learnt that conduct of cases and recording of evidence including cross-examination by advocates called *Vivaka* and *Prashna Vivaka*, and many other matters were provided for.

Galanter also states, "The salient features of a modern legal system include uniform territorial rules, based on universalistic norms, which apportion rights and obligations as incidents of specific transactions rather than of fixed statuses" (p. 15). This naturally raises the expectation that Galanter would proceed to show that the traditional law in India, whether substantiative or procedural, did not exhibit the features of "uniform territorial rules based on universalistic norms". But this is not done. It would be perhaps difficult, if not impossible, to do so.

Formulating a disjunction between transactions and fixed statuses is unfortunate and illogical. A transaction is generally the result of agreement between two units on persons capable of volitional freedom. Thus a marriage, as much as transfer of property, can be a transaction. The involved parties acquire a status like husband and wife, promisor and promisee, seller and purchaser. Rights and obligations based on universal norms applied to these and many other fixed statuses in the traditional law of India even before the emergence of "industrialised societies of the last century."

Undertaking a comprehensive assessment of each of the essays included in the book under review, would necessarily result in something as lugubrious as Rajeev Dhavan's introduction to the book. Constraints of space do not permit that exercise. Suffice it to say that Galanter has not done justice to the subject chosen as expressed in the title. But the fault may be in the choice of the title.

The subject is too vast and requires monumental research covering Indian as well as foreign scholarship. Apparent absence of such comparative research and scholarship has produced something like the elephant of the blind men. Yet, the essays in the book are interesting even if not related to the title of the book. ❑

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विरासत जो हमारी ही नहीं पूरे भारत की है. . . .

मध्यप्रदेश, हिंदुस्तान का दिल है और हिंदुस्तान की आत्मा यहीं रहती है।

इस बात का सबूत है यहां जगह-जगह पायी जाने वाली इतिहास की बिरासत–जिसमें प्रचुरता है, निरंतरता है और श्रेष्ठता है।

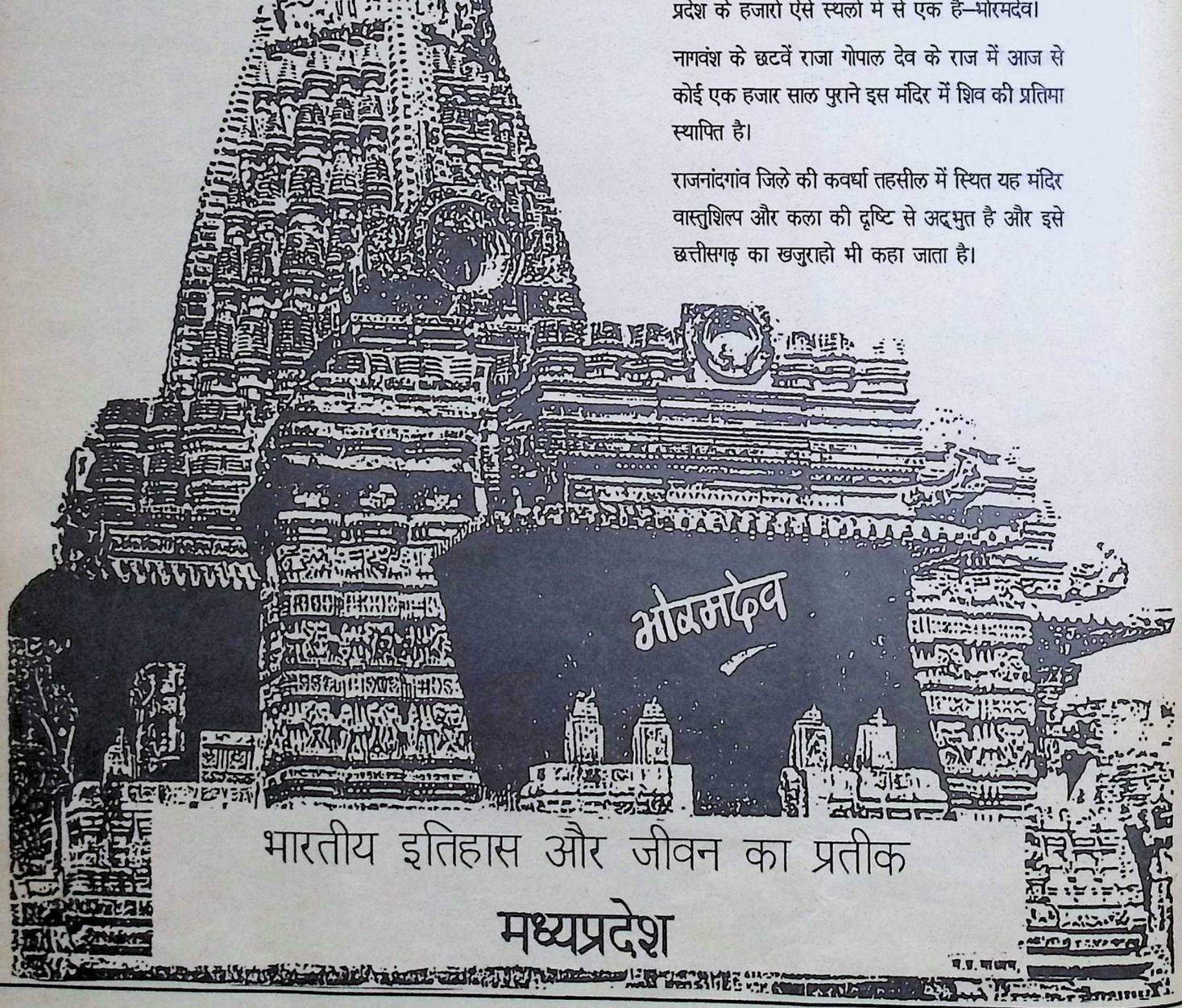
भीमबेटका के लाखों बरस पुराने शैल चित्र देखे, सांची के स्तूप देखें या बाघ की गुफाए–सब में झलक है–हमारी सभ्यता और वर्तमान जिंदगी की।

कुछ जगहें यदि, मौर्य, शुंग, सातवाहन, गुप्त, प्रतीहार, कलचुरी परमार वंशों की विरासत है, तो खजुराहो हमें चंदेलवंशियों की याद दिलाता है।

प्रदेश के हजारों ऐसे स्थलों में से एक है–भोरमदेव।

नागवंश के छटवें राजा गोपाल देव के राज में आज से कोई एक हजार साल पुराने इस मंदिर में शिव की प्रतिमा स्थापित है।

राजनांदगांव जिले की कवर्धा तहसील में स्थित यह मंदिर वास्तुशिल्प और कला की दृष्टि से अद्‌भुत है और इसे छत्तीसगढ़ का खजुराहो भी कहा जाता है।



भारतीय इतिहास और जीवन का प्रतीक

मध्यप्रदेश

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A MILLION FACES OF GENDER OPPRESSION

N.S. Jagannathan

VEETU MOOLAYIL ORU SAMAYALARAI
(A Kitchen in the Corner of the House)
A Collection of Short Stories

By Ambai

Published by Cre-A,268, Royapettah High Road, Madras-14, 1988, pp. 145, Rs.22.00.

Delhi in the sixties and the seventies was to modern Tamil literature what Paris was to English letters in the twenties, an expatriate haven for major talents, established and fledgling. Quite fortuitously, T.Janakiramanand Ka. Na. Subramaniam, already established writers were in residence. Indira Parthasarathi, a young teacher of Tamil, was greedily absorbing the social and other nuances of the manipulative politics of the capital and converting them into memorable novels. Sujatha Rangarajan—the female names both these men effected, for whatever reason, have struck—then an official of the meteorological department, had just begun writing and was even then instantly recognised as a major talent in the making. He has since left Delhi and become something of a cult figure of the pulp magazines, a victim of his own versatility and, possibly, the word processor.

Two other young writers of great promise that Delhi nurtured—Aadavan Sundaram and S.Sampath, died young. These and many other Tamil writers in Delhi and elsewhere had in *Kanayazhi*, a Delhi based Tamil monthly since moved to Madras, edited by Kasturi Rangan, an incomparable nursery of talent. Authors young and old and literary hangers on were then part of the *Kanayazhi* group, an active literary menage. *Kanayazhi* has an impressive record as a midwife of Tamil literary talent, with a number of famous and not so famous names in modern Tamil literature, having been published for the first time—often after having been rejected by the more widely known magazines—in the pages of *Kanayazhi*. Ambai, the author of the book under review, also an expatriate in Delhi then—she has since moved to Bombay—is one such discovery of *Kanayazhi*.

Ambai is a fugitive writer, her total output not exceeding twenty odd stories in as many years. Her first volume of collected stories was published about ten years ago and of the eleven stories published in this volume, all but two appear for the first time and the other two in self-consciously "little" magazines. Despite this meagre output and indeed possibly because of it, she is a profoundly important writer. A social scientist deeply interested in the interface of radical politics and "women's issues" she is better known as C.S.Lakshmi, a familiar name to the readers of the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Almost all the stories in this volume are about woman in a man's world. Put thus, it sounds banal and coming from a man—condescending. But the description encapsulates, however inadequately, complex insights that Ambai's searingly honest exploration of the predicament of Indian women—rather Indian woman—in strikingly different ambiences has thrown. For example, *Velippaadu* (The Revelation) is about an encounter between a young woman researcher doing field work in the back of the beyond in the deep South on the banks of the Tamraparni river and some village women of the area. The young scholar makes some disconcerting discoveries and self-discoveries during this sojourn. The title story is set in Ajmer in Rajasthan and is about an affluent, half-modern, joint family of several generations living under one roof. (There is an ambiguous suggestion that the story is occasioned by a family reunion.) It consists on the distaff side of widowed step-mother of the current patriarch, his wife barely two years younger than her mother-in-law, the wives, some of them educated and employed, of her progeny. One of them, interestingly, is a dark girl from Mysore in the far South, barely accepted by the elders of the family. It must have been one of those things that happen in the best families, though this is not mentioned. These women work out their complicated equations among themselves and with the menfolk in a doubly oppressive regime of feudal authority and gender discrimination.

The third story, *Karuppu Kuthirai Chathukkam* or the Dark Horse (Kaala Ghodaa) Square, is about the interfaces between the slum dwellers of Bombay and a variety of radical left, civil rights and women's issue activists in the wake of a gang rape of a memorably indomitable woman of the slums. In every one of these stories, Ambai comes out with uncompromising insights about the million facets of gender oppression and about the courage and resourcefulness with which this oppression is coped with by its victims in traditional and nontraditional settings. The struggle for the limited power available to these victims is also delineated without cant and a certain irony.

In the first of the three stories mentioned above, the naive research scholar, her head full of abstractions about the status of women, comes face to face with reality, probably for the first time. When she tells the fifty year old wife of her host that she is "writing a report" on women, pat comes the question, "What is there to write about women?" The scholar tells her that the report will be about how women live, what work they do and what women think, about the way they live. The older woman then says, almost contemptuously, "What is there to think? We bear children, cook and feed."

"Surely you are not bearing children all the time? You must have thought of something in between? No?"

Indeed she had. This woman who had earlier told her life history "in four lines" as the author puts it—married at fourteen to a cousin, who was twenty then, acquired a "cooking empire, borne three children, two of them female brats, all married off and she a grandmother now—had once a passion for the sea, as a result of a chance encounter with a photograph in a book. Once in a feverish delirium, she shouted, "Ocean, Ocean" and was promptly declared mad. Since then occasionally she would express a desire to see the sea at Tiruchendur, a pilgrim centre dedicated to Muruga. And "He", a great Muruga Bhaktha, would slap her hard and that was the end of her passion for the sea.

Later in the same story, a younger woman—indeed a chit of a girl—tells her that she

Protocols

a poem by Vikram Seth

What can I say to you? How can I now retract
All that that fool, my voice, has spoken—
Now that the facts are plain, the placid surface cracked,
The protocols of friendship broken?

I cannot walk by day as now I walk at dawn
Past the still house where you lie sleeping.
May the sun burn away these footprints on the lawn
And hold you in its warmth and keeping.

❖

From All You Who Sleep Tonight, by Vikram Seth, published by Penguin (India) Ltd., February 1990

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wants nothing more of life than a husband who wouldn't lose his temper and with whom she could walk the street, choose her own saree and see films. One wonders what sort of report the scholar produced.

The title story is more substantial and makes some acute points about the nature of the Indian woman's servitude in a barely modernised feudal, patriarchical family and, more interestingly, about the power struggle among the oppressed. The kitchen is at once a prison and an empire for these women of several generations. In one of the key passages in the story, the wife of the patriarch and current ruler of the kitchen, recovering from an illness shares a secret with her daughter-in-law (the Mysore one). At the tearful "Bidayi" after her wedding at the age of fourteen, her mother whispered in her ears. "Establish your supremacy in the kitchen. Never forget to deck yourself seductively. These are your only two weapons and from them flow all power."

This authority over the kitchen is the key for dominance within the overall oppression. The day the step-mother-in-law became a widow, she till then the queen bee, became an impotent appendage, condemned to permanent vegetarianism, perpetual hunger, and cadging for morsels from the younger women. No more for her the meat dishes and the local brew she quaffed at will till then. But with a cunning that comes naturally to the oppressed she resorts from to time to time to the stratagem of pretending to be possessed by the goddess to get her fill of rich food and liquor. A widow is fair game for subaltern tyranny, but not goddess Amba.

The story is redolent with intimations of benign male tyranny of varying degrees of intensity. In what is presumably a family reunion, a picnic near the lake is condescendingly decided on by the menfolk for pleasing the women. As usual, a woman's work is never done. Night long preparations are afoot, taking care not to disturb the sleep of the men. The eldest daughter-in-law frets over the list of things to be done, food to be prepared, baby food and undies and diapers for children to be packed, husband's shirt to be ironed and children bathed in time . . . and so on. Though a bank officer in her own right, she wouldn't dream of asking her husband to bathe the child or iron his shirt. And once at the picnic spot, more cooking and feeding, while men—and in fairness, some women—play cards, children to be escorted to the shit-house and, of course, the washing up.

In between, revealing conversations. What will you be when you grow up? Addressed to a boy, the answer is, "A pilot." If to a girl, the answer in childish lisp, "I shall make big chappatis." And the grandmother's heart bursts with pride. And among the grown women, the worried conversation is about missed—and not missed—periods. And what does the dark daughter-in-law from the South, something of an intruder and an alienated Brechtian figure think about it all? Ambai, speaking through her, puts it thus:

> Within the lightless narrow-windowed kitchen, the eight legs of that sea-creature octopus that is of Authority, encircle the women in a cruel bind. The more the legs tightened around them, the more happily did they lie, happy in their bondage. If the legs of authority encircled the waist, they called them a waist-ornament. If the feet, they called them anklets. If placed on the head, they call them coronets. Voluntarily entering and imprisoning themselves in a world surrounded on all the four sides by iron railings, they think they are ruling over a kingdom. Once inside, they take earth-shaking decisions like today's menu including mutton pulav and tomorrow's poori masala. Phoney authority.

(The last two words are surely unnecessary?)

In an even more interesting conversation with her mother-in-law recovering from a near fatal illness, she is told, "The day my father-in-law died, I inherited this bunch of keys in a silver ring. Look at my Authority. Am I not the queen of this realm?"

"No," says the daughter-in-law, more to herself than to her mother-in-law. "No, no authority flows from that bunch of keys. It flows from your husband, my father-in-law. Free, Free yourself from all that."

Towards the end of the story, the moral of it all is drawn in an almost apocalyptic vision of the liberation of the woman. It is an extended monologue, nominally addressed to the mother-in-law and goes thus:

> If only, you, my mother-in-law, had not clung to this illusion of power and stuffed the crannies of your mind with mutton pulav, *aalu poori*, condiments, salt, sugar and oil; if only you had not worried about worms in stored rice and pulses during the rainy season and of pickles in the mango season, of sherbets, jams and juices during the season for the different fruits, of the vessels to be washed, of missed periods and children's illnesses.
>
> If only you had avoided all this, maybe, you would have seen the apple fall, the steam that issues out of the nozzle of the kettle, you would have discovered new continents, written epics sitting atop the *Kailasa*, painted on the walls of caves, flown in the sky or created a world without wars, prisons, gallows and chemical weapons . . .
>
> And when you plunge deeper and deeper and touch the bed of the river . . . your cunt and your breasts and your womb would detach themselves and fall off. The odour of cooking will go far away. The glitter of your jewels will vanish. You will lose your sex. Free at last from all this . . . you will discover your true strength.

Ambai's prose is tightly packed, expressing a controlled passion. Meticulously realistic in cumulative details of the obsessive presence of the kitchen, cooking and a thousand other details of domesticity, there is an overhanging symbolism of woman's servitude which is extraordinarily evocative as a metaphor of the Indian woman. In any reckoning, this is a marvellous piece of work. ❑

N.S. Jagannathan is a well-known journalist, and advisor to the Indian Express *group of newspapers.*

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Alok Prasad

THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL

By Shashi Tharoor

Penguin Books (India) Ltd., 1989,pp. 423, Rs. 95.00

> *". . .We Indians have a great talent for deriving positives from negatives. Non-violence, non-cooperation, non-alignment, all mean more, much more than the concepts they negate . . . ."*

There are few recent publications which one will enjoy reading as much as Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*. The book has already become something of a publishing event. It has been widely reviewed and excerpted. The general welcome which the book has received reflects the quality of Shashi Tharoor's work.

I have met Shashi Tharoor only once. He made an impression. What started out as a professional discussion about UN organisations gradually mellowed into a wide ranging chat. We did not talk about his book. But I do recall his uncanny ability to combine a serious concern for issues, with a refreshing irreverence towards personalities and prejudices. That is also the lasting impression left by his book. He raises questions of considerable profundity and answers them with humour and insight. In the process he is sometimes profound, always witty and only occasionally lapses into the banal.

Despite the author's disclaimer, it is worth emphasising that *The Great Indian Novel* is a novel. Readers will find several events and characters disturbingly familiar. Many will enjoy a not too difficult guessing game of relating the characters to well known personalities. It would, however, be churlish to charge the author (as some may be inclined to do) with either misinterpreting the epic *Mahabharatha* which he takes as the primary source of inspiration, or with distorting contemporary Indian history which provides the setting for the book. The essential brilliance of his concept, in fact, lies precisely in reflecting images and events from the epic to recent Indian developments. The manner in which he does it provides some fresh insights into both.

Nevertheless, one should expect some howls of outrage. Not everybody has so well developed a sense of humour, or of the absurd. One gets the feeling that Shashi Tharoor would not particularly mind such a reaction. His style is calculated to affront and to provoke. He is all the more readable for it.

While belonging neither to the philosophical or historical genre, the book does have a historical and philosophical perspective which places it well above, though not outside, the category of "a good read". In retelling a two thousand year old tale set in contemporary India, Shashi Tharoor manages to convey a sense of continuity and change which is so much a part of the Indian kaleidoscope.

The canvas is necessarily wide. Neither the story of the *Mahabharatha*, nor

Alok Prasad is a serving officer of the Indian Foreign Service.

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the events leading to India's independence and democratic government, can be easily compressed, even in a novel. Shashi Tharoor however retains a tight control over a racy tale as told through Ved Vyas the "elder statesman". When Ved Vyas tends to wander into philosophical asides, he is brought up short by his inscrutable but wordless scribe Ganapati.

Set in the princely state of Hastinapur which is soon to be annexed in the British Raj, the book moves with an easy fluency (and considerable mischief in the royal household), to stirring events, as the ascetic Gangaji and his anointed heir lead an ancient land towards freedom. The author evokes some striking images in his descriptions of events like the Bibigarh Gardens Massacre or the Great Mango March. He captures with great skill and imagination the mood of the times. The sequence is of course his own.

Shashi Tharoor need not have been drawn into dissertations on the Taj Mahal or the *Kama Sutra*. But then such obvious 'Indian' symbols are perhaps obligatory in an 'Indian' novel, particularly one with at least one eye on foreign audiences.

A brilliant concept, well executed and something in it for everyone. But then is that not the story which should be told in The Great Indian Novel? ❑

Elections, as you well-know Ganapathi, are a great Indian *tamasha*, conducted at irregular intervals and various levels amid much fanfare. It takes the felling of a sizeable forest to furnish enough paper for 320 million ballots, and every election has at least one story of returning officers battling through snow or jungle to ensure that the democratic wishes of remote constituents, are duly recorded. No election coverage is complete, either, without at least one picture of a female voter whose enthusiasm for the suffrage is undimmed by the fact that she is old blind, unlettered, toothless or purdah-clad, or any combination of the above. Ballot-boxes are stuffed, booths are 'captured', the occasional election worker/candidate/voter is assaulted kidnapped/shot, but nothing stops the franchise. And for all its flaws, universal suffrage has worked in India, providing an invaluable instrument for the expression of the public will. India's voters, scorned by cynics as illiterate and ignorant, have adapted superbly to the election system, unseating candidates and governments, drawing distinctions between local and national elections. Sure, at every election someone discovers a new chemical that will remove the indelible stain on your fingernail and permit you to vote twice (as if this convenience made any great difference in constituencies the size of ours); at every election some distinguished voter claims his name is missing from the rolls, or that someone has already cast his vote (but usually not both). At every election some ingenious accountant produces a set of figures to show that only a tenth of what was actually spent was spent; somebody makes a speech urging that the legal limit for expenditure be raised, so that less ingenuity might be required to cook the books, and everyone goes home happy.

From *The Great Indian Novel*

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Art and the Young—A Freshness in Creative Vision

Krishna Chaitanya

LIKE METHUSELAH, I find I also have got into the habit of repeating that I am not as young as I used to be, though old Meth would have argued that youngsters of seventy have no right to grouse. But while Meth was convinced that the young people were all going to the devil, I have the feeling that the young are doing splendidly. This feeling may be partly, but certainly not wholly, due to the fact that the thunders of the many "Progressive" groups that mushroomed on the eve of independence or immediately thereafter subsided into whimpers as the years rolled by. Digging into the archives, I find this in the manifesto of the Calcutta Progressives who came up in 1945: "Art when it ceases to have an immediate social function either loses all vitality or becomes a passionate research into problems of form thrown up by the artist himself." F.N. Souza, philosopher and spokesman of the Bombay Progressives who had their first exhibition in 1949, declared that art would concern itself with solving the problems of the poverty and suffering of the masses and the Group's manifesto said that the artist community would identify itself with the people. But we have Souza's own statement as to what happened subsequently. He abandoned that philosophy in 1948 "to devote myself to art produced, as it were, in an ivory tower". What one likes about the young artists of today is the absence of rhetoric, the quiet sincerity. Art is primarily form though ultimately it has to have a message too. The young people are not apologetic in pursuing their formalist exploration, nor fishing for media notice in the expression of genuine social concern.

What follows here is the sojourn of a slightly moth-eaten hombre wanting to keep young by mixing with the young. Since this is an article and not a book, mention of the young artists cannot be exhaustive. But the selected artists will hopefully be typical enough to indicate the variety of explorations and the promise latent in them. When speaking about the young, we need a cut-off age. It is thirty–five here, in conformity with the procedure of youth festivals and scholarship awards.

To begin with two young painters. Watercolour is not so popular as it used to be. The reasons are many. For one thing, it is a very exacting medium, execution has to be swift and sure, corrections are impossible unlike oils. But there is a slow revival of watercolour afoot now and, considering that he is only twenty–six, Subrata Kundu has made a splendid contribution to it. Right from the beginning he rejected the narcissistic brooding which is in favour today and which makes the artist forget that he belongs with the earth, its plains and hills, with the habitations men build to accent or mar their beauty. Kundu gets a rich gradation of tones and mirrors the ambience with luminous transparency. He also notes the good earth marred by slums, its air polluted by chimneys. Very recently he has moved to acrylics, using diffuse spreads of thin colour over the acrylic base to get subtle play of colours and tones. This helps him to suggest deeper intimations. The "Stranger" thus is an ominous intruder into our complacent world, a visitor from the Apocalypse, perhaps our own transgressions, that have made the earth a slum or a battlefield, returning as nemesis.

Jaya Ganguly (b. 1958) comes from a conservative family. But her deep compassion has given her the courage to deal with a theme which is usually taboo in conservative circles: the lot of the women whom many circumstances have conspired to condemn to the red light district. She has painted this series in watercolour but in unusually large format, sometimes in scrolls. The extended pictorial space has enabled her to create a vast fresco, narrating a saga or more correctly anti-saga, of cruel oppression by man and consequent degradation of woman. With flaming colours and contrasts of large spreads of heavy, dark tone, she has been able to produce a most powerful indictment of this terrible social evil. The influence of the brooding loneliness of the mask-like visages painted by Rabindranath Tagore and the stark, clear narration of the Kalighat pat paintings can be seen in her work, but it has been fully assimilated and focused on a theme of great social relevance.

There are several young sculptors of great promise but I have selected for mention here V.K. Rajan and Soman because they do not work in marble, the medium of elitist art, but have opted for humbler material like wood and terracotta. Thirty–three year old Rajan hails from a village and belongs to a family of traditional wood architects or carpenters. He portrays the men and women he has grown up and is living with. Life is neither a carousal nor a long caress for most of them, it can sit heavily on their mind and the cares of the mind mould the visage and the frame. There is no need to stress the pathetic with undue detail and unreal drama. Given insight in understanding, fidelity in depiction is enough. This is the reticent way of Amrita Shergil and it is Rajan's approach too. The fine result is that he has been able to bring out in the visages and stances of the people whom he depicts their strong character. There is little prettiness here, but there is a, psychologically penetrating seizure of the personality. Some of the heads have a Socratic dignity. Man's domesticated animals—the cart horse for instance—also share with him the burden of life, and they also figure in his work. Not many know that the ancient Greeks painted their marble sculptures; medieval Europe has left a precious legacy of painted wood sculptures. This feature as well as the types represented and the style of presentation may at first give the impression that he has turned to pop art. But beneath the undramatic and occasionally raw surface, a poignant drama of real people slowly emerging.

Perhaps the most noteworthy young artist of today is Soman who has just entered his thirties, for he has raised the humble medium of terracotta to a startlingly high level of expressiveness. His sculptures are not reliefs but are shaped fully in the round and they are of large dimensions, with almost life-size figures. Sometimes there are nearly a dozen figures and also units of architectural backgrounds—houses and lanes—which have to be assembled afresh for every display. You can not only walk around these creations, you can walk through them, for they are whole locales, rural and urban, in miniature.

Most of these creations connote more than they denote, but the major implications of the sculptures and their groupings are clear most of the time. A giant wave engulfing men seems to refer to the green house effect which may cause the seas to rise and engulf the coastal areas of the world in a matter of decades if we do not control the fluorocarbon discharge into the atmosphere. A composition alluding to our habit of raising monuments to the great so that we can ignore their messages is satire with a sharp edge. But in several of his compositions with complex settings and many figures, Soman seems to be creating a whole theatre with the action frozen at the episode where it detonates as a crisis. Here the meaning is not always clear and as he progresses he will have to evolve nodal episodes which can tell the whole story summatively and clearly.

But one thing is clear. Soman's theatre where terracotta has been escalated to unprecedented expressiveness will not be music hall or romantic comedy, it will be the drama of existential confrontations. He has recently received a very big commission for a complex of environmental sculptures in the open at Suraj Kund and is studying the mythology of the sun and the legends of Haryana for a multitude of figures whose placement will cover a whole acre. ❑

Krishna Chaitanya is the author of more than thirty-five books on Art, Literature and Culture.

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Understanding the Body Language of Kathak

Rashmi Vajpeyi

AS THE YEAR and this decade came to a close Bhopal witnessed two interesting festivals on Kathak. One, an annual event of the Ustad Allaudin Khan Sangeet Akademi on various aspects of Kathak— this year being pure dance in Kathak, *Nritta Prasang*—and the other, a festival centering round a senior and innovative Kathak dancer Kumudini Lakhia, 'Kathak Kumudini' organised by the Sangeet Kala Sangam.

These two events succeeded in focussing attention on the changing aesthetics and grammar of Kathak. The concept of body language emerged in a new perspective. For a long time we have been talking about the two main aspects of Indian dance—the *nritta*—pure dance and *nritya*—dance combined with expression, the *abhinaya* element. Broadly speaking the first is understood to be an abstract form laying greater emphasis on the intricacies of the *taal* and *laya* element, creating many visual forms in space, while *nritya* emphasises the expressional part laying more stress on face and hand gestures while also delving in the rhythmic dance movements. These are rather broad distinctions. Traditionally in both *nritta* and *nritya* aspects there was never a very strict division. There is yet another aspect, *natya*, which actually and logically is an aspect of theatre in which spoken words play a vital role. *Natya* also is considered as one more aspect of dance where only facial expression and hand gestures are used and songs take the place of spoken words. With these as three separate categories *nritta* has very little scope for expressional elements.

Rashmi Vajpeyi who lives in Bhopal is a well-known exponent of Kathak.

In this light *nritta* seems to be the predominant element in Kathak. The dancer presents a variety of footwork and a series of compositions or *bols*, as they are technically called, which apparently have no meaning. The intricacies of rhythm are displayed creating images of sound and form in space. The fast tempo and numberless pirouettes dazzle and excite the audience. In a situation like this not much time is left for the expressional element. Thus gradually this very important aspect of abhinaya was being neglected by most of the Kathak dancers. As the stress was basically on virtuosity, the finer points of even the *nritta* element were discarded. With this background when one discusses *nritta* in Kathak one obviously tends to talk of *nritta*—the pure dance—as devoid of any meaning and emotion. Interestingly, in this festival there seemed to be a very conscious effort at trying to provide meaning to the apparently meaningless dance syllables. Birju Maharaj calls it language of the dance and the pure dance as 'poetry of the body'. These small units of pure dance are complete within themselves like poems. Birju Maharaj also refers to them as small ballets as each one has a separate identity. With this interpretation the *nritta* takes on a very different and new meaning and rightly so. The dance itself ultimately is the poetry of the body, and thus it cannot be devoid of emotion, for there is a person doing it. Secondly, just as abstract painting and music without words can evoke emotions so does the pure dance. He is like visual poetry.

The entire western ballet, modern dance and also most of the folk dances do not use any words

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Understanding the Body Language of Kathak

continued from page 45

or facial expression the way our classical dance forms use. In that sense it is *nritta*—the pure dance. And yet no one feels that these are incapable of evoking emotions or that these do not convey any meaning. The basic problem is that we have got an idea fixed of *nritta* as being devoid of *bhava* that we have stopped thinking about it in its totality and its references.

There are two things to be taken note of while we talk about the *nritta* aspect of Kathak. One is the language of the body, the other the neumonic syllables which form the base for these body movements. Both these combine to establish the body language, that is, the style of a particular dance form. When we make a statement about the meaninglessness in a particular fragment of *bols*—it is also because we do not understand that particular language. We have not only stopped understanding that language, we have also refused to give it a meaning. How many of us understand fully a Bharatanatyam or a Kathakali dancer using all the *hasta mudras* to convey different levels and shades of meaning since we also often do not know the language in which the piece is sung? Yet no one complains or criticises these *abhinaya* pieces as being incapable of conveying any meaning. The reason is simple. One we know that since there are words and the dancer is trying to convey them through a particular medium it is bound to have meaning whether we understand it or not. Secondly, no one would dare to risk exposing ignorance. Thus, what really happens is that in one we search for meaning whether we understand it or not, and in the other we don't, for we believe it has none and it is futile to search for any.

With the growing awareness of this tight compartmentalization in dance Kathak gurus and dancers have started looking at this situation and problem from a new angle. It is true that the *bols* of *Paran, Tukre Tatkar*, the *taal* and *laya*, their intricate patterns have no verbal and visual images and presumably no metaphors are involved but this ultimately is also a major part of the Kathak repertoire. It uses the basic rhythmic patterns and meters for its base as does any other poetry. For this is the poetry which is employed to enhance the beauty of the body movements. It is an independent language and just because one does not understand it, it does not cease to be a poetry or something devoid of meaning and beauty. A dancer may hear and perceive a whole story, incident, situation or a *bhava* in a particular piece of syllable. It is interesting to know that many of the sounds of dance syllables have come from various sources. It may be nature—the dripping or flowing water, the thunder or wind rushing through the leaves, sounds of the birds, animals and insects, human voices or things created by him. Similarly, the movements have also been drawn from things all around us. The combination of these are bound to evoke certain memories/images in an alert mind.

In the early forties, Raja Chakradhar Singh of Raigarh composed numerous pieces for dance and the Pakhawaj and he gave a name to each of his compositions like *Madhu gunjan* (humming of the bees), *Gaj Vilas* (elephant play), *Muktavali* (pearl string) etc. The syllables used are meaningless and yet if studied carefully they do convey meaning in some form or the other. Similarly, when these neumonic patterns are danced they do create some form—pattern in the space. The *nritta* therefore leaves enough room for imagination. During the discussion, Ashok Vajpeyi commented that in dance body takes a form. In *nritta* it refuses to be a metaphor or something else, it does not become a Radha or a Krishna—instead it celebrates its own self. It brings the beauty of body through its body language, the movement, the forms it creates in collaboration with rhythm. When the body starts depicting the story of the other it becomes *nritya*, and as long as it maintains its own identity through movement and rhythm it is the *nritta*. Sunil Kothari expressed a similar thought in different words—when a body moves in rhythm it is *nritta* but when it also starts thinking it becomes *nritya*.

Kathak has come a long way from the *Katha Vachak*—the story telling tradition. Its delving into abstraction brings it very close to modern poetry and modern sensibility. Kumudini Lakhia's *Duwidha* and many group compositions like *Athkim, The Peg* and *Setu* underline this sensibility and also the strength and expanse of this form. While drawing from the tradition she gives new meaning and dimension to the form. The same movements acquire a different look and express an idea or emotion which appears almost new. Birju Maharaj on the other hand uses movements firmly rooted in the tradition and yet he is able to create an infinite variety of moods, themes and ideas through his compositions in pure dance, *nritta*—in items like *Lilangika, Laya Parikrama, Swar Tarang* etc. It is through compositions like these that a new grammar, idiom and language are emerging which explore different dimensions of the human body and its movements through rhythm and tones and through music in general—a language universal in many a sense and yet very distinctive and bound by its very strict laws, rules and methods of practice and display. ❑

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Tribal Literature

A Little-known Heritage

Vinoo Hora

THE FIRST EVER exhibition of books in tribal languages was held under the auspices of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts from September 20–24, 1989 at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

Although 7.76 per cent of India's population is tribal consisting of five hundred groups, only half of them speak tribal languages of their own. One-sixth of the tribal population is bilingual and the rest of the tribals have adopted the mother-tongue of their non-tribal neighbours.

Literacy rate amongst the tribals is rather low—11.30 per cent as against the all-India literacy rate of 29.45 per cent. Amongst the tribals, the Mizos are educationally the most advanced group; their literacy rate is 70 per cent. Therefore, there is a dearth of tribal literature in our country. In fact, most of the tribal groups have no script of their own. A popular myth among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh is that long ago all wisdom was written on pieces of skin which some greedy tribesmen cooked and ate with the result that they have remained illiterate. The Sema Nags believe that they once had the secret of writing but dogs ate the skin on which it was recorded.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that it is only with the advent of Christian missionaries on the scene that tribal literature got a filip. To bring about effective evangelisation among the tribals who were Animists, the missionaries had to perforce learn the tribal dialect. They compiled catechism and composed hymns. For example, in 1855, Father Lievens settled down in Ranchi, learnt the Kurukh dialect of the Oraon and composed hymns in Hindi set to Western tunes. But soon they switched to the Roman script. In 1868 Rev. E.L. Puxley adopted a system of letters which Forbes, Shakespear and other literary stalwarts have called "Roman Hindustani". Puxley edited *A Vocabulary of the Santali Language*, and in 1929–32 appeared Reverend P.O. Bodding's *magnum opus: A Santal Dictionary*. In 1903, Bodding had already translated the Bible into Santali. Around the same time appeared commendable works like S.J. Hoffmann's *Mindari Grammar* and *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*. Despite the injustice and atrocities committed by the British civil servants on tribals, they contributed significantly to the development of tribal language. Some works worthy of note are: Thomas Herbert Lewin's *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect* (1874), R.B. McCabeis' *Outline of the Angami Naga Language* (1887), J. Herbert Lorrain's *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1898), and Lionel Burrow's *Ho Grammar* (1915).

Since then, the use of the Roman script has continued, specially among the tribes of North-East India where Christianity is the dominant religion. The post-independence movements of the tribals to affirm their identity has given a further boost to the rejection of regional character. The Bodos launched a major agitation in the seventies for the adoption of the Roman script, rejecting the Assamese script which had been used since the Bodo dialect came to be written in the last century, but later settled for the Devanagri script. However, a search for an indigenous script has also been attempted. In 1905, Raghunath Murmu invented a Santal script known as *Ol chiki*.

The Meitei have recovered their lost script, and the Ho claim that a script has been revealed to them by a tribal god. In recent years, literary associations have come up such as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the Rabha Krowrang Runchum, the Hmar Literature Society, the Santal Sahitya Akademy, the Bible Society, etc.—products of cultural regionalism, no doubt, but augur well for the development of tribal literature. The Nagaland Bhasa Parishad has undertaken to publish a series of Hindi-tribal language dictionaries.

The introduction of tribal languages as subjects in schools, graduate and post-graduate institutions has helped to create a vast body of text-books and original writings in tribal languages. Christian theology forms a great part of tribal religious literature. But now there is a movement among the tribals to revive their religion as practised by their ancestors in an attempt to maintain their identity, culture and traditions. Seng Khasi and the Donyi-Polo (religious movements) are making attempts to produce indigenous religious literature of their own tribes. The *Gita* has been translated into Khasi, and the *Ramayana* into Santali. The original writings include poems, novels, short stories, literary essays, biographies, technical literature, and so on. A number of daily newspapers, weekly and monthly journals, are published in tribal languages.

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts is to be complimented for making an all-out effort to undertake to raise a core collection of books written in tribal languages, as also books on tribal cultures in regional languages, and exhibit them under one roof as part of the Nehru Birth Centenary celebrations. More than one thousand books were collected although only four hundred were on display. In the field of literary heritage, the tribes of the North-East are far ahead of the tribes of South India, and the Gonds and the Bhils. The recent exhibition was but a glimpse into the wisdom treasured in the timeless world of the tribals.

It was only befitting that the exhibition of the books in tribal languages, to celebrate the Nehru Birth Centenary, should be inaugurated by Rani Gaidinliu. The 74 year old Rani—queen of the Nagas, as she is popularly known—hails from the Kabui Naga village of Nungkao in the Trans-Barak basin in the West District of Manipur State. Born in 1915, the third daughter and the seventh child of the village chief Lotthonang, Gaidinliu was an independent and strong-willed girl from childhood. Her Amazonian ways raised many an eyebrow but failed to mellow her indomitable spirit. Perhaps this was a prelude to what the future had in store for her. At the age of 13, she came under the spell of Jadonang, her cousin, who started the movement to oust the British from Manipur. Upon his death (he was hanged by the British) in 1931, the mantle of the leadership of the Nagas fell upon her young shoulders. She was their beloved and revered benefactress who would deliver them from the life of bondage and misery. She had heard about the struggle of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru and, unknown to these great leaders, kindled in the Nagas a burning desire for independence. She defied British laws and religious propaganda, forbade her people to pay taxes or to carry the luggage of the British visitors without remuneration. The British, who had thought that their troubles were over with the execution of Jadonang were now made to sit up and take cognisance of the seventeen year old girl who, in the words of Nehru, "had in her pride of youth, dared to challenge an Empire". She moved from village to village in disguise, with the British in hot pursuit, but kept up her anti-British activities. In desperation the British wreaked vengeance on her people, burnt villages, promised to pay a handsome price to anyone who captured her dead or alive; her followers bore all but did not let her down—such was the charisma of the young girl; she was reported to be in a dozen different places at the same time and the frustrated British damned her as a criminal and a sorceress. They used every deceit and ploy at their disposal and eventually the proud Rani was captured by the British in 1932.

It was in 1937 that Jawaharlal Nehru came to

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know of Gaindinliu languishing in the dark cells of the Shillong jail. He went to meet her and was shocked to see the maltreatment so bravely borne by this young girl, at that time in her early twenties. He pleaded with the British Government for her release but to no avail. He then made a personal request to Lady Nancy Astor, a British MP, to look into young Gaidinliu's case. He received a letter dated May 10, 1939 from Lady Astor that" . . . . the movement among the Nagas has not yet died down and would break out if she were released, and that she is at present considered a potent source of danger to the peace of Manipur State and the Province of Assam. . . ."

To this Nehru promptly retorted in a letter, ". . . . I should have thought that the peace of Manipur State and the Province of Assam had a very insecure foundation if it rested on a girl in her twenties to be kept in prison indefinitely".

Nehru often thought of Gaindinliu and was poetic in his description of her when he wrote: "This heroic girl was captured and sentenced to transportation for life. And now she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude. Six years she has been there. What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an empire. She can roam no more in the hill country through the forest glades, or sing in the fresh crisp air of the mountains. This wild young thing sits cabined in the darkness with a few yards, may be, of space in the daytime, eating her heart out in desolation and confinement. India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her. But her own people remember their Gaidinliu Rani and think of her with love and pride. And a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring her out of her prison cell." Stirred by the vivid writings of Jawaharlal Nehru and curious to meet the lady who had become a legend in her lifetime, I decided to take advantage of her trip to Delhi and seek an interview with her.

These she was, a simple, unassuming little lady dressed from head to toe in her colourful, traditional Kabui Naga attire. Her entourage consisting of a couple of girl attendants, a couple of confidantes and her secretary-cum-interpreter, Abuan Kamei, was with her, sitting around in a homely, informal atmosphere. And yet, there was a look of pride and reverence on their faces when they looked at or mentioned the name of their "Rani Ma". A polite, conventional smile flitted across her wizened old face as she rose from her seat to greet me. We have read stories about Joan of Arc and Rani Laxmibai, Chand Bibi and others but here was before us, in person, a lady of similar stature—a lady who had spelt danger to British rule in North-East India.

Rani Gaidinliu can communicate only in her native tongue, Rongmei.

Q: Are you popularly known as 'Rani' by virtue of your being the high priestess and the acknowledged leader of the Nagas? Or do they call you "Rani" out of love and reverence?

Rani Gaidinliu: No, I have no title. Unlike the stories spread about me by my enemies, the British, and now the Naga rebels, I have never proclaimed myself to be the queen of the Nagas. It was Pandit Nehru who called me Rani, the queen of the Nagas while I was in Shillong jail; the title has since stuck and has been accepted by my people and even by people in the rest of India.

Q: When did you meet Pandit Nehru?

Rani: He came to see me while I in jail. I was very happy to see this great leader in front of me.

Q: What caused you to join the freedom struggle?

Rani: The British were aliens. They had imposed their rule on us through trickery, unjust means. They levied high taxes on my people, treated them cruelly, humiliated them and forced them to carry their luggage without paying them for their services. We decided to throw them out and declare an autonomous Naga state.

Q: Who was your inspiration?

Rani: My cousin, Jadonang.

Q: Can you tell us something about him?

Rani: He was hanged by the British. He was an Animist. He decried the spread of Christianity among the Nagas. He rebelled against the unjust practices of the British and was hanged in August 1931. I was deeply influenced by his teachings. He told us about Gandhiji and his struggle to get India free from British rule. When Jadonang died, I became his natural successor. I carried on the fight for liberation of Nagas from foreign rule. I went underground and fought against the British in Assam, North Cachar Hills and Manipur. But the British had modern weapons. I was strong as a girl and could use the rifle, pistol, etc. with ease.

Q: You were too young, then a mere lass of 16, did you not dream the dreams of a young girl—the warmth of a fireplace, the happy faces of your loved ones around you?

Rani: I too had dreams. But the fire of independence lit within me would not be quenched. Also, with the death of Jadonang, my people looked to me for guidance and I could not disappoint them. Had I got married and raised a family, I would not have been able to serve my people.

My life has been one long sacrifice, yet, even forty years after Independence my efforts have not been rewarded. My people have no state, they lie scattered in three states. Many times I have submitted a memorandum to the Indian Government demanding a separate state for us but nothing has happened. Others have fought and demanded states and have got them.

Q: Why do you say 'Indian Government? We are all Indians and under the same Government.

Rani: We are a part of India, no doubt, and our demand is not unconstitutional. Under Article 2, there is provision for the creation of a new state. I have a right to claim a state. We are Indians, then why are my people neglected while rest of India prospers? My land is as it was before independence—it is one big jungle; there are no schools, no colleges, no industries. Our Zeliangrong tribe, Karbis and Bodos in Assam, Zomis in Manipur, etc., are not happy and are agitating. We are not satisfied socially, politically or economically. We want a separate state so that we too become strong and thus strengthen India and the Centre.

Q: Is your demand for a state a viable proposition—politically, economically?

Rani: This is my life's mission that my people should be integrated. We are the largest Naga tribe and it is possible for the Indian Government to grant us a single administration.

Q: What in your opinion are the causes of non-development of Nagas? We hear of many grants sanctioned for the welfare of scheduled tribes.

Rani: Yes. The Government of India has sanctioned vast sums, I am told, but these have not reached the minorities. There is corruption, misuse of funds by the implementing authorities; the officials, contractors and politicians. We are exploited by the majority.

Q: What is it now that you desire?

Rani: A Zeliangrong state. Earlier, we only asked for a district, but now my people are restless. They have been neglected for too long. It was not for this that we made sacrifices during the national struggle. Now our demand is for statehood. It is for this reason that I am here—to meet and discuss our future with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Q: You said your people were "getting restless". We hope that there are no separatist desires behind their restlessness.

Rani: No, no! I am not with those Nagas who are carrying on underground activities. I have given up the path of violence. Our demand is for a State within the sanctity of the Indian Union.

Q: What would you say about modernisation of the tribals?

Rani: Modernisation is necessary for development but it should not be at the cost of our traditions, art, culture—our heritage. Therein lie our roots—we must not cut them.

At the end of the interview her interpreter remarked: "Did you know she is a poetess and in her youth used to sing, and dance, too? She used to weave and create her own designs."Here a few lines from one of her sonnets which are an indication of the storm that still rages in the Rani's heart

Zeliangrong mei duidai kumma lung niye chamei king nge ai Pingmak runne Tabni jaengrnicho ragwang paan khownic ngam nai na lung nuje.

Translated into English it means: We, the Zeliangrong cover the world. There may be millions of people against us. But we are not afraid as God is always with us. We also want to live with power, to build up our land. ❑

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OUR GREEN FRIENDS

Vijaya Ghose

BRAHMA'S HAIR
Edited by Maneka Gandhi
Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1989, pp. 188, Rs. 30.00

It's not easy to find a good book on Indian trees. Ask me—I've been looking for one for a long time. And then to find a book for children simple enough for them to understand and interesting enough to hold their attention is well-nigh impossible. But Maneka Gandhi and Yasmin Singh's *Brahma's Hair* immediately rivets your attention and makes you want to read more—something one does with a story book!

If you have been totally unconscious of your green friends—and I mean it in the literal sense, not the figurative one!—*Brahma's Hair* will surely give you a totally new prospective of the world of trees and plants. The book begins with the legend, "It is said that all plants are created from the hair of Brahma, the Creator." That in itself brings to us a vision of all-giving, all-sustaining plants with which our survival and that of the created world is closely linked.

In many ways *Brahma's Hair* is like a story book. The main text recounts legends and myths associated with about thirty trees and shrubs. The legends are taken from popular folk-lore and also from ancient Puranic texts.

Each chapter begins with the name of the tree in different languages—starting with Latin and going into at least six Indian languages. This is extremely useful, particularly if you are a traveller or a "tree-watcher!". Each tree has a short introduction which gives the genus of the plant and then delves into the mythical association with that particular tree. And this is what is fascinating. For example, it says about the Red Silk Cotton Tree: It is said that Pitamaha, the creator of the world, rested under the Semul after his labours were over. Its cup like flowers are considered sacred to Shiva. When the tree is in full bloom it is compared to Lakshmi, the goddess of good fortune, standing with her arms outstretched and a lit oil lamp on each palm.

Its Sanskrit name Yamadruma means Trees of the Infernal Regions, because though it makes a great show of its flowers its fruit is not edible. Also, according to the *Mahabharata*, its thorns are used for torture in one of the seven hells.

One could compile a 'Did you know' series merely from these introductions!

Did you know that . . . .

. . . the name Banyan is said to have been given by the British to a tree under which Baniyas or merchants assembled for business and worship?

. . . the name Alstonia Scholaris (Devil's Tree) commemorates Professor C. Alston (1685–1760) of Edinburgh? Scholaris refers to the fact that the tree was used earlier for making wooden slates for school children.

Why the Ebony tree has dark wood.

When the Earth sank beneath the Great Flood, a Kond and his wife decided to seek shelter inside a gourd. They took a bundle of sticks with them so that they would have fire when they came out. They pulled the gourd shut after them and went to sleep.

Many many days later they awoke. They broke the gourd and saw that the water had dried and a new world awaited them. They emerged from the gourd carrying their bundle of sticks. The Kond lit a fire with the wood and the couple slept.The next morning the Kond and his wife went to explore this new world. In their absence, a burnt twig took root and grew into an ebony tree, and when they returned they saw it. The tendu is black because it came from a charred piece of wood.

From *Brahma's Hair*

. . . the Champa (Temple Tree) was mistakenly thought to have originated in China, which is why it was named Gulechin or Flower of China?

. . . in olden days the Tulasi plant was grown outside temples which were used as rest-houses for travellers? That's because it can curb thirst. With a couple of leaves under his tongue, the traveller would feel less thirsty.

. . . the strong perfume of the Keora (Screwpine) can neutralize the fishy smell of the sea-coast? . . . . Jehangir in his memoirs *Tuzule-i-Jehangiri* says that the scent of Keora is so strong and penetrating that it even obscures the scent of musk?

. . . 'Bhendi' is also the Hindi name of the Tulip Tree because its flowers look like those of the Okra or Bhendi?

. . . the Kadamba Tree is associated with the monsoons in Sanskrit literature? It is said to bloom only when it hears the roar of thunder clouds. The breeze that accompanies the rains is called Kadambanila or the fragrance of the Kadamba.

There are word associations too. The Latin name for the Black Plum (Jamun) is Eugenia Jambolana Syzygium Cumini. Eugenia comes from Eugene, Princess of Savoy, a patron of botany in the seventeenth century. Syzygium comes from the Greek Suzogos which means 'paired'. Jambolana comes from the East Indies word Jamboos or Rose Apple, hence the Hindi Jamun. The Sanskrit for the same word is 'Phalendra' which means chief of fruit giving plants. The Teak Tree in Latin is Tectona and comes from the Malayam Tekka which first went into the Protugese language as Teca. It means carpenter. Grandis means large. The Sanskrit word Shaka means power, strength and vegetable!

The name Peepal has an interesting origin. The Peepal tree resembles the poplar only in that its leaves also tremble and shake. Aryan immigrants on seeing the Peepal for the first time called it Pappel or Poplar, the name they were familar with. Even now in Italy, the transplanted Peepal is called Poplar delle Indie or the Indian Poplar.

Each story chapter ends with a short run-down on the tree. It is a matter of fact conclusion that gives all the relevant details—size, the shape of the tree and the leaves, the fruit and finally the utility of the plant. Sometimes interesting facts are added. Like, "the largest mango tree in the world grows in a village called Burail in Ambala. It has been given the name of Chhappar or roof thatch probably because it gives shade to so many. The area covered by the crown is 2,700 yards and its average yield of fruit is reported to be 450 mounds or around 175 quintals."

Stories or legends attached to a tree are taken from many sources—old religious texts, folk and fairy tales. To do so, the authors must have had to research deeply to get the relevant or the most interesting stories. But the hard work has paid off.

A word about the illustrations. In line drawing, the stylized black and white illustrations by Mona Bhandari are competent. The close-ups of the leaves and the fruit could perhaps have been have more detailed. One or two minor punctuation errors have crept in like the inverted commas closing before the full stop. But unless one is looking for mistakes with an eagle eye, one will miss them.

The book is highly recommended not just for its readability but also for the wealth of information found in it. Quizzers, fact-finders, info-buffs, you'll love this book! At Rs. 30/- it's a great bargain. ❑

Vijaya Ghose is the associate editor of Target, *New Delhi.*

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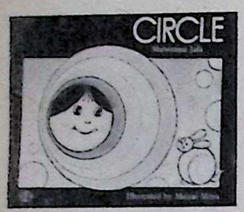
What are Our Children Reading Today?

Geeta Dharmarajan



'Indian books for children? I am afraid we don't stock them,' says a bookseller in Delhi's prestigious Khan Market which boasts of some of the best book shops in the capital. I look around and find a title or two, poor, sad-looking relatives of the imported glossies that fill the shelves. The only good-looking Indian books for children here are the *Ramayana*, retold, fables in comic-book format, Maneka Gandhi's book on Indian trees, *Brahma's Hair*. I despair of finding any books to review till I land up at a bookshop in the South Extension market that not only stocks children's books made in India, but also has the courtesy of not placing their children's book section near stinking bathrooms, like the ones in Connaught Place seem to do!

As I look through the books that India produces for her children (and not just in English), I wonder where we went wrong. Why is it that our bookshops are filled only with second-rate imported books for children? With Nancy Drews and Hardy Boys? Why is it that our librarians and teachers don't get children excited about good books—whether it be Tolkien, Jack London, Phillippa Pearce and Madeline L'Engle or our own Margaret Bhatty, Anita Desai or Shashi Deshpande?

Why has Operation Blackboard, an ambitious project started by the Education Department of the Government of India to specifically put good books into school libraries all over the country, seem to have backfired? On the one hand there are publishers who will have nothing to do with it because of the underhand methods that, they allege, they have to resort to get their books reviewed, while, on the other, there are any number of new publishers for children who bring out books specifically to feed into Operation Blackboard. These books are so badly edited and printed that one can only pray that they will not be pumped into too many schools.

Why is it that a writer of the calibre of Ruskin Bond has his best stories published abroad? In his cottage in Mussourie I see at least a dozen books for children—illustrated profusely, printed on paper that is so good to touch, hardbound, beautiful. They are some of his best stories for children, but they are not available in India. And, why should A. Ramachandran, one of our best illustrators who also teaches at the Jamia Milia, sell his exquisitely illustrated books, regularly, to a Japanese publisher? 'From one book I made enough money to build most of this house,' he says. Both of us look at the aesthetically pleasing house of his in one of Delhi's newer colonies. No, he is not interested in writing for Indian children. But, it is not just the money that dictates his choice. 'Who appreciates such work?' he asks.

And, he is right. The Publications Division of Government of India which produced Sheila Dhar's *This India*, is still to come up with anything as good in the last seventeen years. There have been barely a handful of publishers for children's books; few out of them have had any concern for quality of writing, editing or production. It seems that some kind of Gresham's law is operating here—the bad driving the good to extinction because it is cheaper, more easily available because it is more aggressively marketed and because it is, like fast food—frothy, easier to consume. So, we have comic books, imported racy adventure stories or the everlasting Enid Blyton, and countless versions of retold fables, and myths and classics for children.

Yet, there *are* redeeming factors. There *are* good books that are beginning to appear—if only adults will look at them. Besides the literally hundreds of magazines for children in English and the other Indian languages (varying in quality from the excellent to the abysmal) there are new publishers and some older companies who are coming into children's book publishing in a big way with creative fiction. Thomson Books has closed down its children's book division, but I am told that Roli, Rupa, Frank Brothers, Ratna Sagar, Sterling, Orient Longmans and now Penguin (with its Puffin imprint) have exciting books for Indian children on their anvil.

To get to specifics, based on books that I was asked to review for Operation Blackboard, plus others that I bought in the market: There is an excellent collection of stories by Sigrun Srivastav, *The Ghost Riders of Darbhanga*. A sensitive writer by any standard, Sigrun has excelled herself in this collection. Here is quick movement, fresh suspense, and amusing dialogue that heighten the funniness (if there is such a word!) of the action. Sigrun can descend to the sentimental sometimes, and she does here too, but the merit of the collection cannot be gainsaid.

I got to see four collections of mystery stories by the members of the Association of Writers for Children that is based in Delhi. These are well brought out, though the stories seem facile often descend to cliched and wellworn plots. Some are not even mystery stories! The other book, one of the first science fiction books for children by an Indian is Dilip Salwi's *The Robots are Coming*. Those who are diehard sci-fi fans may find these stories not satisfying enough but, as an introduction to sci-fi, they should serve the purpose. And, the illustrations are excellent!

The Elephant and the Dog by Badri Narayan for smaller children comes from National Book Trust. A delicately-tinted book with Mr. Badri Narayan's inimitable drawings, the story starts with the traditional 'Long, long ago, there was a king . . . .' It's the story of an elephant and a dog who become good friends. The dog is sold. The elephant pines. The king orders the dog to be brought back. And, all ends well. I found the moral a little defective since the trainer of the elephant sells the dog to a rich man yet it is the buyer who is chastised by the king in the end. But Badri Narayan's other book, *Find the Half Circles*, would be an excellent buy for a preschooler. An unpriced publication from the Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research is *A Child and A Tree*, by Forrest Corkery and Marti Mueller. An imaginatively written story about protecting our environment.

Of the other fiction, the only ones worth noting here are the evocative picture books that are being published by the Safdar Hashmi Trust (in Hindi and English) as also the picture books from Ratna Sagar and Frank Brothers. Targeted at the preprimary child, the Ratna Sagar books are colourful and beautiful to look at, though some of the books are not definitely for the 2–5 years old as mentioned in the cover; while the Frank Brothers books are good value for money, printed as they are on good paper with a simple and appealing story line.

An excellent book from NBT is *Premchand*, a biography written by the writer's son, Amrit Rai and has whimsical line drawings by Siddhartha Banerjee. So also *The Limca Book of Records*. This book, which has been compared to the Guinness Book, is an 'eventful' book, is overflowing with tidbits of information on India. From the first children's book (*Rani Ketaki ki Kahani* by Insallah Khan Insa, published in Urdu in 1773) to the biggest matchbox collection (1,750 matchboxes, belonging to Vijay Kumar Khandelwal of Delhi) the entries meander through records, standards and achievements of Indians living in India. Though there are some spelling mistakes, the book is extremely well produced. In art paper and well bound it puts to rest all rumours that Indian publishing is yet to come of age.

To end, the writing in the fiction mentioned above are not the best, yet. They cannot always be said to set standards for our writers. But, they *are* there, the base on which we can build a solid collection of stories, fantasies, creative works of real art for our children. ❑

Geeta Dharmarajan is a writer of fiction for children and has recently published a collection of stories entitled Super Brat and other Stories.

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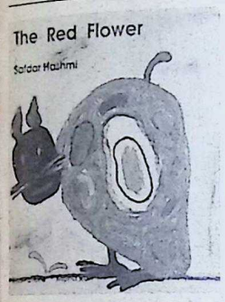
FROM SAFDAR WITH LOVE

Anita Kohli

PED, pp. 24, Rs. 10.00; BAAG KI SAIR, pp. 24, Rs. 10.00; GADBAD GHOTALA, pp. 24, Rs. 10.00; BANSURIWALA, pp. 16, Rs. 10.00; THE RED FLOWER, pp. 30, Rs. 12.00; DUNIYA SABKI, pp. , Rs. 15.00; NATAK KI DUNIYA, pp. 56, Rs. 15.00.

By Safdar Hashmi

Published by Moloyashree Hashmi for SAHMAT, 1989.



Safdar Hashmi's untimely and sudden death sent shock waves through the urban population of Delhi jolting them out of their stupor, when they felt they couldn't be shocked further in an already brutalised environment. But his life, his work, his sincerity and his unsullied vision of the simplicity of the common man, came through to us more sharply after his death, and perhaps helped to pull us out of the apathy into which we had sunk. Suddenly people stood up, took note and dug out of their own psyches the very simple and straightforward principles he had stood for and tried to propagate.

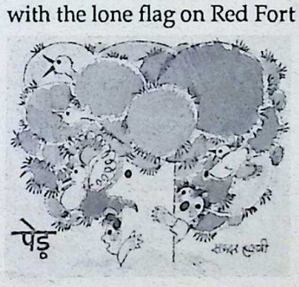
It is these that are reflected in his set of books for children. *Duniya Sabki*, *Baag Ki Sair*. *Ped* and *Gadbad Ghotala* are books of poems. The poems are simple, direct, entertaining and carry a message that is subtle and yet so effective that it goes down like a satisfying meal, delicious yet nutritious and healthy.

In *Baag Ki Sair* he takes children on a trip to Lodhi Gardens, and while the children enjoy the beauties of nature, they are pulled up by the mali for their treatment of the grass, the birds and the flowers. The lesson is well taken and the mali joins them in their picnic. So many lessons are easily learnt—respect for property, love of nature, conciliation; respect and understanding for authority. *Gadbad Ghotala* is a child's delight, an upside down world where people walk on their heads and smell with their feet. When things are righted the world regains its order. Goodness knows that while deviation from a norm is desirable on occasion, our crying need is order!

Ped is the most delightful of these books. No child can help wanting to hug a tree and preserve it after reading the poem and looking at the illustrations. Micky Patel's illustrations are gay and endearing and bring home the point in the nicest possible way.:The tree has a personality and so do the children, the birds, insects and butterflies. Preservation of trees comes across as a joyful task and the poem contains a message of hope and promise even after the barrenness of autumn.

Bansuriwala is a clever adaptation in Hindi of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn. Hashmi's ideology of the 'power of the people' makes the end a happy one when the people throw out the corrupt leader, recall the piper and reward him handsomely. Leftist, democratic, honorable and a happy ending at that.

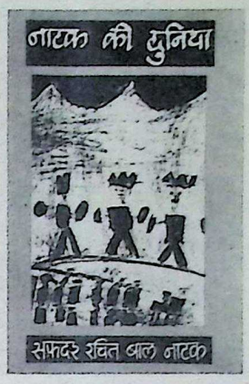
Duniya Sabki is a collection of poems interesting for the fact that they celebrate the lowliest, a thumb (*Shivi Ka Angootha*) mosquitoes (*Machar Pehalwan*) Spiders (*Makdi Ka Jaala*) Jaundice (*Tabiyat Jaldi Thik Karo*) etc., and they give a new perspective on the common. *Holi* is no more colourful than the colours in nature and *'Azaadi'* is a concept confused with the lone flag on Red Fort or TV.



Through the rhyme and rhythm of these poems, through the smile and the chuckle, one pulls up to think a little and then exclaim, ah yes! why didn't I think of that! In certain poems the illustrations make the poem. *Shivi Ka Angootha* is one of them. *Duniya Sabki* is a narrative poem familiar in its two main protagonists, Akbar and Birbal and in the universality of its message which comes through clearly—*Duniya Sabki!*

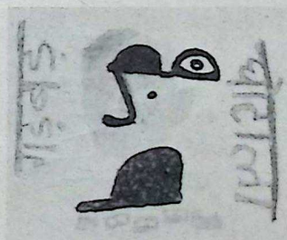
The illustrations on the whole are simple yet effective.

Theatre was always Safdar Hashmi's forte and he had a missionary zeal that cannot remain hidden and it manifests itself in his book of plays-inverse for children—*Natak Ki Duniya*. The first play *Raja Ki Khoj*, touches upon exploitation, a communication gap between the ruler and the ruled, sycophantic rats leaving the sinking ship and the wily courtiers. While reading it one felt for a moment that the concepts were too adult for children even though the characters were animals in a jungle kingdom; but this is not really so. Children today are so much more aware, and this being so, quite conversant with the ills of governments and societies. Perhaps it is best that children ponder on these things before adult disillusionment sets in.



The play *Yeh Duniya Rangeen* using the different colours as characters explores the ideas of cooperation, integration and the importance of the contribution of each to a larger whole. All colours are found in nature and add to its beauty, some combine to give other colours and jealousy is pointless as each has its place in the scheme of nature. The last two plays *Girgit* and *Gopi Gavayya Bagha Bagayya* are based on a Chekov play and a Satyajit Ray movie respectively, but have been adapted to be totally topical and relevant. There is an earthiness and rawness about the plays, occupied more with issues than literary niceties making children feel life as it is, not what one would like it to be. There is the odd swear word, English phrases and a general lack of illusions. Through the humor there is a silent anger about the way things are and though the humor remains the lesson also goes home.

There is no doubt that the author set out to make a point and to act as a catalyst to make children think and react. There is also no doubt that on certain subjects he has an original point of view and that he is a champion of the small and the forgotten. However, one can't help but feel that there is too much cynicism and disillusionment to be communicated to such young children. One admires unconditionally his desire to change things for the better, but the young must be moulded through idealism that will change the world not through disillusionment with things that must be changed.



The language is totally colloquial and informal. The straightforward rhymes make them easy to read and enjoy in their musical simplicity. The presentation reminds one of Russian books for children, only the prices are capitalistic. Not value enough for money except for *Natak Ki Duniya* and *Duniya Sabki* that are well brought out and have enough reading material to make them good value.

I suppose illustrators feel that a child identifies with paintings that are more like their own. Unlike an adult who searches for abstraction in reality, I think a child is more comfortable with the real and the clearly defined.

Safdar Hashmi's voice is worth listening to and through these books children too will be able to hear it. ❑

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The titles carried in these columns are of books received during 1988-89. Many of them have been reviewed in The Book Review *in the last two years.*

POLITICAL & HISTORICAL STUDIES

Goa's Struggle for Freedom – P.P. Shirodkar. A comprehensive study of the fight of the Goans and the Government of India to free Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli from Portuguese rule. Ajanta Publications, 1988, Rs.175.00.

Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal–Tapan Raychaudhuri. This is a study of the impact of western imperialism on 19th century Bengal which was in a wider context representative of the experience of Asia's elite groups. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 170.00.

A Political History of National Liberation Movement In Asia and Africa–Andras Balogh & Zafar Imam. Covers the years between 1914 and 1985 region-wise and country-wise on the epic struggle of peoples in the two continents. ABC Publishing House, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy And the New Learning–B.P. Barua (ed.) Nine memorial lectures hosted by the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 110.00.

India And The Indian Ocean: 1500-1800–Ashim Das Gupta & M.N. Pearson. A historical review. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 240.00.

French Studies In History–Vol. I: The Inheritance–Maurice Aymard & Harbans Mukhia (ed.) A collection of essays by French scholars which marks an ambitious departure from the conventional lines of historical enquiry. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 125.00.

When Freedom Bleeds: Journey Through Indian Emergency–Brigadier Mohan Toofan. With an introduction by Madhu Dandavate, this is a book of personal jottings of the author. Ajanta Publications, 1988, Rs. 60.00.

Punjab Crisis: The Political Perceptions of Rural Voters–Jitinder Kaur. Views with concern the growth of sectarian consciousness in Punjab and its manipulation by socially and economically powerful groups for their own vested interests. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1989, Rs. 125.00.

The Naxalites And Their Ideology–Rabindra Ray. Author relates Naxalite ideology to Nietzsche and the European philosophical tradition of nihilism, as well as outlines the social and cultural heritage of Naxalism. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 160.00.

Pakistan's Security: The Challenge And The Response–Air Chief Marshal (retd.) Zulfiqar Ali Khan. A thorough and balanced study of Pakistan's geopolitics in the period after the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

The Tragedy of Afghanistan: A First-hand Account–Raja Anwar, translated into English by Khalid Hasan. An authoritative account of what really happened in Afghanistan under Taraki, Amin and Karmal. Verso, London, 1988, Rs. 544.00.

Politics and Administration in Bangladesh–Ahmed Shafiqul Huque. Emphasises the preparation of the localities for participation in public affairs as the all-important first step in the reform of the system of local government in Bangladesh. University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1988, Rs. 200.00.

Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujiber Shashonkal (Bangladesh: Era Sheikh Mujib)–Moudud Ahmed. A political analysis of Sheikh Mujib's rule from 1971-75. UPL, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

The Naxalites And Their Ideology–Rabindra K. Ray. The author studies the movement and its ideology in the context of what it means to be a Naxalite. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 160.00.

Congress And Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase-Richard Sisson & Stanley Wolpert (eds.). Seventeen reputed historians examine the relation of the Congress to Indian nationalism, the emergence of political elites and problems of mobilization, leadership conflicts and problems of unity. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 250.00.

Religion And Politics In India–Moin Shakir, Professor G.N. Sharma felicitation volume. Examines the growth of fundamentalism in India since independence and its consequences for democracy. Ajanta Publications, 1989, Rs. 350.00.

Religious Rebels In The Punjab–Mark Juergensmeyer. The author's thesis is that religious language can be a powerful way of expressing social grievances and religious institutions can become formidable conduits of social change. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 275.00.

Parliamentary Communism: Crisis In The Indian Communist Movement–K.S. Subramanian. A brief estimate of the major dilemmas and challenges before the Indian communist movement and its future prospects. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1989, Rs. 110.00.

Punjab Crisis: The Political Perceptions of Rural Voters–Jitinder Kaur. A micro-level analysis of the Punjab Assembly elections of September 1985. Ajanta Publications, 1989, Rs. 125.00.

We Were Making History: Life Stories of Women In The Telengana People's Struggle–Lalita K., Rama Melkote, Susie Tharu, et al of Stree Shakti Sanghathana. The life stories and perceptions of women who were drawn into the 1948-51 Telengana armed struggle aganst the feudal elite. Kali for Women, 1989, Rs. 160.00.

The Structure of Liberty: National and International–J. Bandopadhyaya. Seeks to offer a general theory of liberty which would rectify the defects of contemporary liberal and socialist theories of liberty. Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989, Rs. 150.00.

Anecdotes of Aurangzeb–Jadunath Sarkar. A delightful collection of stories based on the English translation of Ahkam-i-Alamgiri (ascribed to Hamid-ud-din Khan Bahadur). Enriched by Professor Sarkar's historical notes and brief life sketch of Aurangzeb. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 40.00.

Colonialism Tradition And Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse–Bhikhu Parekh. A critical discussion of Mahatma Gandhi's search for new moral and political principles as bases for reconstituting Indian society. Sage publications, 1989, Rs. 190.00.

How India Won Freedom–Oroon K. Ghosh. A study which aims at fostering a secular outlook in the younger generation. Ajanta Publications, 1989, Rs. 80.00.

Two Swords In One Scabbard: A Case For Presidential Form of Parliamentary Democracy–Vasant Sathe. The author argues the need for amending the constitution to provide direct election of President. NIB Publishers, 1989, 150.00.

The Presidential System: The Indian Debate–A.G. Noorani. Reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the existing political system and concludes that the presidential form of governemnt would pose a threat to Indian democracy. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, Hardback Rs. 125.00 and Paperback Rs. 60.00.

The Indian Paradox: Essays In Indian Politics–Myron Weiner. Edited by Ashutosh Varshney. Explores the apparent contradiction between the high level of political violence and the country's success in sustaining a democratic political system. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, Rs. 195.00.

Prisoners of Faith: A View From Within–Nirmala Srinivasan. A study of the *lebenswelt* of Muslims and Christians which in turn determines their private, public identity orientations as the two largest minority communities in India. Sage Publications, 1989, Rs. 185.00.

Mughal Documents–1526-1627-S.A.I. Tirmizi. An integrated collection of 250 Mughal documents invaluable for reconstructing the history of Mughal India. Manohar, 1989, Rs. 200.00.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China Report: A Journal of East Asian Studies. The January-March 1988 issue (Vol. 24 No. 1) is a special issue on M.N. Roy and a bibliography of his writings on China. Sage Publications, 1988.

Cheated By The World:The Palestinian Experience–Punyapriya Das Gupta. Traces the history of the Palestinian problem from the 1920's to the present. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

The Peace Trap: An Indo-Sri Lankan Political Crisis–P.S. Suryanarayana. A compact study which highlights India's political dilemmas in implementing the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. Affiliated East-West Press, 1988, Rs. 36.00.

Security Problems In The Persian Gulf: Conflicts And Their Resolution– Dr. Syed Farooq Hasnat. Explores the possibilities and abilities of the regional countries to solve its conflicts without succumbing to external pressures. Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1988, Rs. 125.00.

Pakistan and the Changing Regional Scenario: Reflections of a Journalist–Mushahid Hussain. Attempts to understand and explain Pakistan's foreign policy in the changed geo-political context of the last ten years. Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1988, Rs. 275.00.

Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia-Partha S. Ghosh. The author's central argument is that since almost all regimes in South Asia are for varying reasons existentialist, they respond to political challenges, both domestic and external, in a fashion not conducive to the growth of regionalism. Manohar, 1989, Rs. 230.00

Religious and Ethnic Minority Politics in South Asia-Dhirendra Vajpeyi & Yogendra Malik (eds). The essays in this volume raise important questions about the rise of religious fundamentalism in west Asia and the implications for South Asian societies. Manohar, 1989, Rs. 150.00.

SOCIOLOGY

Village Life in India: Past and Present – Bidyadhar Misra. An analysis of the changes taking place in Indian village life from the twenties to the eighties of this century. Ajanta Publications, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

Delhi Meerut Riots: Asghar Ali Engineer. An exemplary documentation of unspeakable horror of Hindu-Muslim communal fight within their own city walls. Ajanta Publications, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

Aging in India – edited by M.L. Sharma and T.M. Dak. Examines the socio-economic, psychological and health and medical problems of the aged and the aging. Ajanta Publications, 1987, Rs. 150.00.

Modernization And Development: The Search For Alternate Paradigms – S.C. Dube. The author seeks to establish the need for alternative development paradigms which take into account not only economic growth but other human needs and the quality of life. Vistaar Publications, 1988, Hard cover Rs. 125.00 and Paperback Rs. 55.00.

Religious Rebels in the Punjab: A Social Vision of Untouchables – Mark Fuergensmeyer. Exposes the avenues of expression that have been available to socially-minded Punjabi untouchables in this century, for example, the Arya Samaj and the Valmiki Sabha. Ajanta Books International, 1988, Rs. 275.00.

Violence and Response: A Critique of the Indian Criminal Justice System – P.R. Rajagopal. A study of organised crime in certain states in the country which is an integral aspect of the political criminal nexus. Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 250.00.

Land, Power and People: Rural Elite in Transition 1801-1970 – Rajendra Singh. Examines the genesis and structure of power and authority in the Indian countryside. Sage Publications New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 195.00 (Hardback).

Development And Social Justice: Micro Action By Weaker Sections - Anil Bhatt. Provides the first systematic evaluation of the way in which grass-roots organizations actually work in practice. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, Rs. 175.00

The Mass Media And Village Life : An Indian Study – Paul Hartmann, B.R. Patil and Anita Dighe. Locates communication firmly within the socio-economic context of community life and offers both qualitative and quantitative data in support. Sage Publications, New Delhi 1989, Rs. 190.00 (Hardback) and Rs. 90.00 (Paperback).

The Muslim Communities of Gujarat: An Exploratory Study of Bohras, Khojas And Memons–Compilation by Asghar Ali Engineer. Shows that the three communities are as much Muslim as any other group of Muslims and yet do not form part of a so-called impenetrable Muslim community in India, brings into focus the different cross-currents of this enigma in the open. Ajanta Books International, New Delhi, 1989, Rs. 200.00.

Social Development: A New Role for the Organisational Sciences–Pradip N. Khandwalla (ed.) The recurrent theme of this pioneering volume on organizational and behavioural sciences (OBS) is the need for a paradigm shift from an excessive concern with Western academic fads and organizational issues to a greater concern with behaviour related issues facing development in Third World organizations. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1988, Rs 195.00 (hardback) & Rs. 95.00 (paper back).

Fertility Policies In Asian Countries–K. Mahadevan (ed.). This volume brings together for the first time scattered information concerning the population policies of major Asian countries. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, Rs 225.00 (hardback).

The Human Condition Today: Some New Perspectives–Focusses on the interaction and exchanges of experiences by a group of intellectuals from various countries who debated the subject at a private seminar in 1986. Prologue by Jagdish Kapur. Clarion Press, 1988 Rs. 150.00.

Indian Society at the turn of the Country–N.J. Chaubey (ed.). Analyses the emerging social trends in Indian Society. Indian Academy of

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Social Sciences, Allahabad, 1988, price not stated.

Impact of Land Use on Nutrition And Health: A Study of Kosi Bhasin, U.P.–G.S. Bisht. An attempt to study existing patterns of land use and their potential productivity vis-a-vis their impact on the health of an economically backward area in the Himalayas. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 250.00.

The Quality of Life: Valuation in Social Research–Ramakrishna Mukherjee. A critical commentary on the all-inclusive notion of the quality of life and how best the objectives of research in this field may be realized. Sage Publications, 1989, Rs. 185.00 (hardback).

Demographic Change And Levels of Living: Studies In National Development In An International Context – Rathindra P. Sen. A study of the impact of unfettered population growth on economic development and living standards in India. Dayal Publishing House, Delhi, 1989, Rs. 140.00.

Society, Culture And Population In India – K. Raghavendra Rao. Attempts to trace the linkages between sociocultural values and traditions and population policy in India against a backdrop of historical demography and sociology. Ajanta Publications, 1989, Rs. 130.00.

WOMEN STUDIES

Unveiling India: A Women's Journey – Anees Jung. An extremely valuable investigation into the lives of ordinary women in India. Penguin Books, Rs. 40.00.

The Trapped Woman: Catch-22 In Deviance and Control – Jossefina Figueira McDonough & Rosemary Sarri (ed.). Succeeds in unveiling gender differences which persist to this day in social institutions. Sage Publications, 1988, Hardback $ 32.50 & Paperback $ 16.00.

Socialization, Education And Women: Explorations in Gender Reality – Papers presented at a seminar organised by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

National Specialized Agencies And Women's Equality: Reports:
1. *National Council of Educational Research And Training* – Vina Mazumdar & Balaji Pandey;
2. *Law Commission of India* – Lotika Sarkar;
3. *Central Social Welfare Board* – Kumud Sharma;
4. *Khadi and Village Industries* – Vina Mazumdar.

These four reports from the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) by a group of professionals striving to work for women's equality and development in all spheres of social life project various national policies which could weaken or eliminate the marginalisation of women's role in society. Centre for Women's Development Studies, 1988, Rs. 80.00 each.

Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue–Indira Parikh & Pulin K. Garg. Traces the journey of women to maturity, the processes of being and becoming and the heritage of folklore, myth and role the heritage of folklore, myth and role models which influence and affect these models which influence and affect these processes. Sage Publications, 1989, Rs. 175.00.

Hindu Women And The Power of Ideology–Vanaja Dhruvarajan. A poignant case study which examines the manner in which ideology, religion and social structure have converged to subjugate women in Hindu society. Vistaar (A division of Sage) Publications, 1989, Rs. 85.00.

Bharatiya Swadheenta Andolan Evam Mahilayen (1857-1947) – Dr. Sheela Mishra. A brief history of women's role in the freedom struggle. Published jointly for the Joint Women's Programme & William Carey Study and Research Centre by I.S.P.C.K., 1989, Rs. 25.00.

Labour Pains and Labour Power: Women and Childbearing in India - Patricia Jeffery, Roger Jeffery & Andrew Lyon. By skillfully interweaving analysis with the villagers' own voices, the authors provide an exciting reassessment of women's role in an agricultural society. Manohar, 1989, Rs. 325.00.

ART & CULTURE

Iconography Of Siva In Pahari Paintings – Saroj Panthey. A pioneering work covering paintings in temples, museums and private collections and relating them to the iconographic data in the classical texts. Of special value to those interested in iconography and cultist traditions. Mittal Publications, Rs. 500.00.

Visvarupa – T.S. Maxwell. Through a study of selected north Indian sculptures and bronzes of 2nd to 9th centuries, this book protrays the attempts at plastic interpretation of Arjuna's vision of Krishna as God. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 225.00.

The Ramayan–Lakshmi Lal. A recreation of the epic in rich language and style. Orient Longman, 1988, Rs. 225.00. Illustrations by Badri Narayan.

Bhatkhande's Contribution to Music - Shobhana Nair. The saga of a herculian task of reviving Indian classical music by a great musical genius. Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1989, Rs. 200.00.

ECONOMICS

China: Issues In Development – Ashok Mitra (ed.). Comments by Indian social scientiests on aspects of the recent socio-political and economic developments in China. Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd., N. Delhi, 1988, Rs. 120.00.

Economy Society And Polity: Essays In The Political Economy of Indian Planning – Amiya Kumar Bagchi. Volume in honour of Professor Bhabatosh Datta. Oxford University Press, for the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

Indian Agriculture: A Policy Perspective – B.M. Bhatia. Analyses the need for increasing the productivity of rainfed agriculture. Sage Publications for the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, 1988, Hardcover Rs. 140.00, Paperback Rs. 65.00.

The Indian Economy: Recent Development and Future Prospects – Robert E.B. Lucas & Gustav F. Papanek (ed.). Focusses on various aspects of the current economic scene in India. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 110.00.

Wage Price Productivity of Leading Sectors In India – Basudeb Sahoo. An effort to examine the wage-price-productivity link in the mining, plantation and transport sectors of the Indian economy during the last three decades. Ajanta Publications, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

Agricultural Price Policy for Developing Countries – Edited by John W. Mellor and Raisuddin Ahmed. Examines agricultural price policy in the broader context of the technological and institutional changes. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 120.00.

Indian Social and Economic Development – A bibliography compiled by Centre for Development of Instructional Technology and Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology. Provides a comprehensive abstracting and indexing service for all those engaged in the development process. Sage Publications, 1988, Rs. 175.00 (Hardback), Rs. 75.00.

Biotechnology Revolution And The Third World: Challenges and Policy Options – Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries, New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 250.00.

The Retarded Economies: Foreign Domination And Class Relations In India And Other Emerging Nations – Nirmal Kumar Chandra. A collection of essays, focuses on the exchanges between the poor and rich nations, concerns itself with the domestic scenario and is a critique of the recent tilt, inspired by the IMF and the World Bank, towards liberalism in India's economic policies. Sameeksha Trust, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 240.00.

The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720 – Om Prakash. Demonstrates Bengal's crucial role in the development of world trade networks that occurred after the discovery of the Cape route to the East Indies. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 150.00.

Eagle Over Pakistan – Zubaid Ahmad Firdousi. Discusses the reasons for American intervention, its successes and the reasons for the rising burden on Pak economy leading to miseries of the people. Book Traders, Lahore, 1988, Rs. 295.00.

Who Shares: Cooperatives And Rural Development – D.W. Attwood & B.S. Baviskar (eds.). Based on current findings from the study of cooperatives at the grassroots level in Asia and Africa, this collection of essays seeks to find how effective they are in the rural areas. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 250.00.

Political Regimes, Public Policy And Economic Development: Agricultural Performance And Rural Change In Two Punjabs – Holly Sims. Documents the divergence of the fortunes of the two Punjabs since independence. Sage Publications, 1988, Rs. 175.00.

Rural Economy of India – N.L. Murthy & K.V. Narayana. A set of 18 papers in which various facts of Indian rural economy have been critically examined. Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1989, Rs. 250.00.

India's Mixed Economy: The Role of Ideology And Interest in its Development – Baldev Raj Nayar. A study which examines analytically the role of ideology and interest in the creation of India's public sector against the larger canvas of theory. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1989, Rs. 350.00.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Humanity At The Crossroads: An Inter-cultural Dialogue – Karan Singh & Daisaku Ikeda. In this dialogue between two global citizens is set out the exploration into the interactions between two great religions of the world. Oxford University Press, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

Towards A Dalit Ideology – M.E. Prabha. Theologians and lay people of many persuasions explore the need for a liberation theology in India. The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 40.00.

Rainbow Journey And Feast – Biblical Covenants And A Theology of Mission – Thomas J. Stuckey. The Abraham Memorial Lectures. The Indian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 10.00.

Ecology Culture and Philosophy: Metaphysical Perspectives from Basanta Kumar Malik – edited by Madhuri Sondhi and Mary M. Walker. Reveals our current crisis against a horizon of possibilities ensuring human survival if new ways of thinking can become prevalent. Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 130.00.

Essential of Psychology – S. Radhakrishnan. An attempt to present in a simple and clear way the important principles of psychology. Foreword by S. Gopal. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988, Rs. 100.00.

Religious Rebels In the Punjab – Mark Juergensmeyer. Shows the importance of social class in the inter-religious struggles that have troubled Punjabi politics throughout this century. Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1988, Rs. 275.00.

A Guide to the Revelation – David H. Van Daalen. Fuller notes on some general themes support the detailed interpretation, ISPCK, 1988, Rs. 35.00.

Wake Up and Live – Jamila Verghese. Challenges young people to be alert and take responsibility for life around them. ISPCK, Delhi, 1988 Rs. 5.00.

Psychology In India: The State of the Art: Vol. I–Personality and Mental Processes; Vol II: Basic and Applied Social Psychology – Janak Pandey (ed.). Studies form a part of a three volume set which presents a comprehensive review of Indian research in psychology over the past decade. Sage Publications, 1988, Rs. 185.00 each.

The Concept Of Sprituality – Margaret Chatterjee. This study ranges in its treatment over theological and philosophical issues and situates the contemporary concern with spirituality in the 20th century, relating the spiritual to the natural world, and to affliction and the world of men. Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989, Rs. 80.00.

LITERATURE

Bachuvachan – An Occasional of The Arts And Ideas. A delightful collection of essays portraying multiple voices and rich vastness, the innate manifestations of the pluralism of creativity and articulation. Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, 1988, Rs. 50.00.

The Defector – Monika Maron. Translated from the German by David Newton Merinelli. The story of Rosalind in quest of freedom from physical, emotional, political and spiritual bonds of existence. Readers International, 1988, $ 8.95.

The Devil's Wind – Manohar Malgaonkar. A reprint of the tragic, yet fascinating story of Nana Saheb of Bithoor set against the backdrop of the uprising of 1857. Penguin India, 1988, Rs. 60.00.

Tamas – Bhisham Sahni. The brilliantly human story of the trauma of the Partition of the Indian sub-continent. Translated from the Hindi by Jai Ratan and with an introduction by Govind Nihalani. Penguin India, 1988, Rs. 55.00.

The Hotel Ritviera – R.K. Laxman. A hilariously funny novel by the famous cartoonist and writer. Penguin India, 1988, Rs. 50.00.

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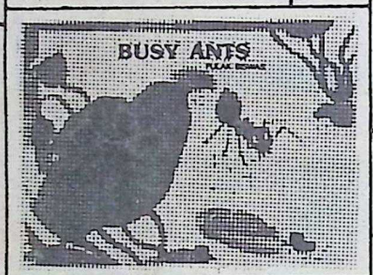

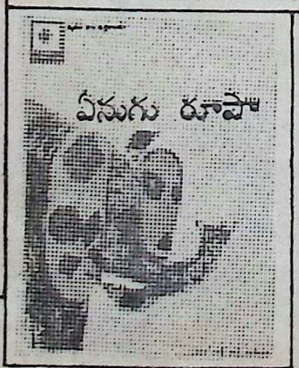

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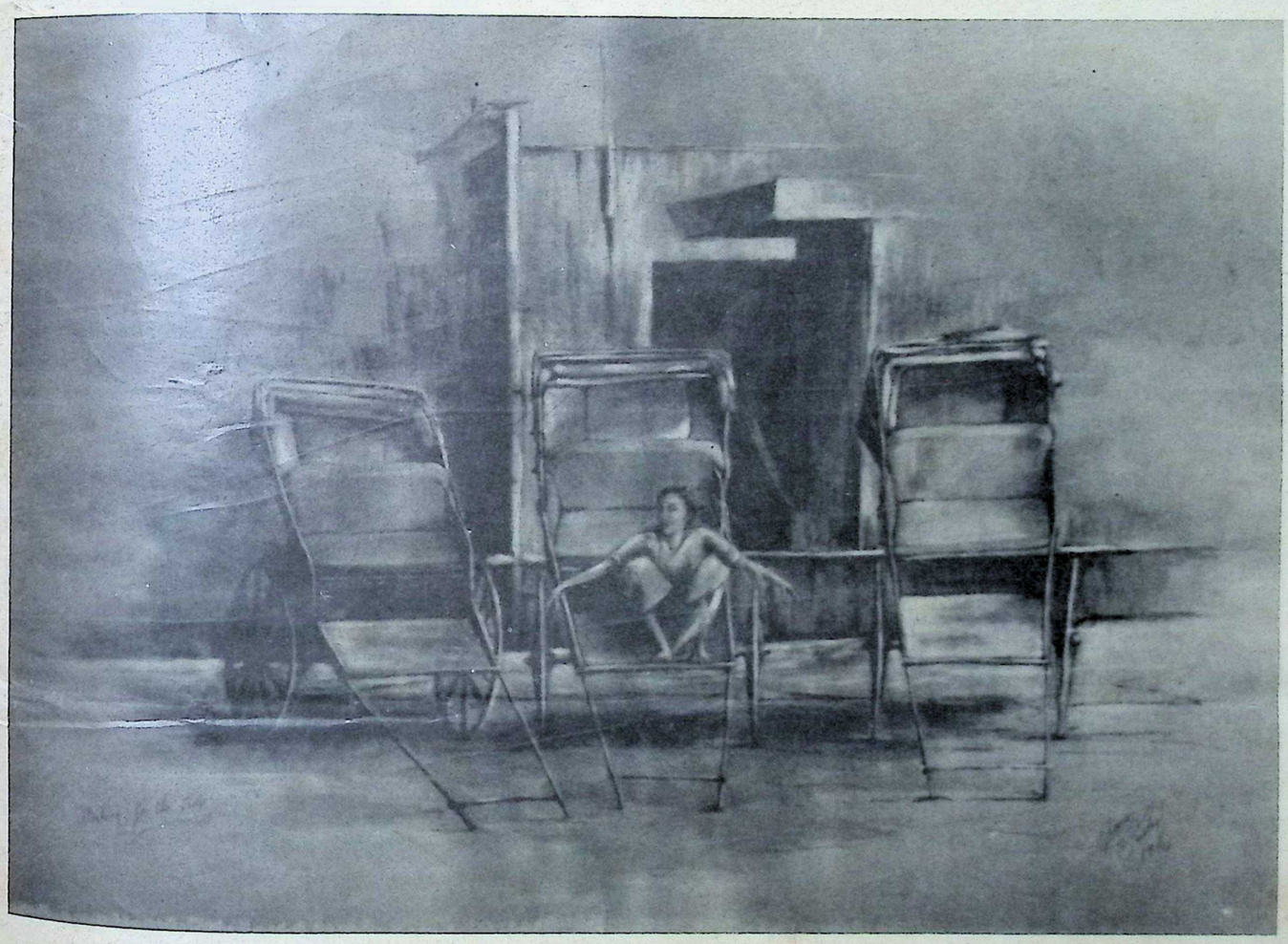

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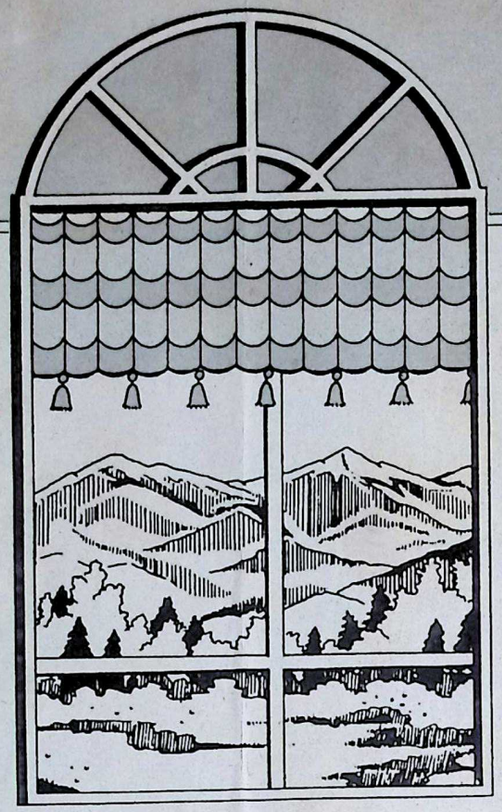

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THE END OF COMMUNISM ?

Mohit Sen

Two essays which appeared recently dealt with the dramatic changes taking place in the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc and their implications for the international system: the first, provocatively entitled "The End of History?" by Francis Fukuyama (*National Interest*, Summer 1989) and the second, "To the Stalin Mausoleum", (Daedalus, Winter 1990) by Z, described as a sometime observer of the Soviet scene. The review article published is a critical commentary by Mohit Sen, the well-known ideologue, on these two essays. ❑ *Editor*

Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?* and Z's, introduced as "a sometime observer of the Soviet scene, "*To the Stalin Mausoleum*, have one major common theme. According to both these authors, Communism has failed as an ideal and the Communist movement and its power has collapsed or about to do so without any hope of retrieval and revival.

The basis for this conclusion is, of course, the dramatic events in central and eastern Europe last year and the serious difficulties that perestroika is encountering in the Soviet Union.

Fukuyama sees in these developments the unfolding of Hegel's Idea which becomes material in the shape of the triumph of liberal democracy. "What is real is national" is interpreted by him in the conservative sense of the destination of humanity's progress having been reached. One is reminded of the exactly opposite sense in which Engels interpreted this aphorism—whatever is national has to be real and the existing reality has to be tested and judged in terms of historically evolved and evolving reason. And, therefore, for Engels and Marxists, in general, whatever exists has its reason but is transient because of the development of reason itself. It was the cofounder of Marxism who drew attention to the conservative and reactionary character of the Hegelian system in contrast to the revolutionary character of the Hegelian dialectic. Fukuyama has once again taken the conservative system of the great philosopher to try to give an ideological underpinning to his reactionary conclusion that the so called collapse of Communism is a return to liberalism. In his view this ideology of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been able to overcome the challenges of Communism and Fascism and looks likely to be able to do the same as far as nationalism and religious fundamentalism are concerned. History ends with liberal democracy triumphing in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere.

Z, who has also read Fukuyama, is rather dismissive of the "endism" theory. One is inclined to agree with him through not for his reasons. Why Fukuyama had to drag in Hegel to celebrate the "triumph" of liberalism is not very clear. The only possible reason seems to be the correct assumption that though Hegel is little read, his obscure respectability might overawe many to accept as profound what is in fact the commonplace conclusion of most commentators that we are witnessing the "terminal crisis of Communism."

Z, somewhat along the lines of Kolakowski's Main Currents of *Marxism* of a decade ago and Bryezinski's book published last year, brings together quite one-sidedly aspects of the history of the Soviet Union and contemporary happenings, to make the point that Communism and the Soviet Union face the prospect of early mortality. This, however, in his view does not mean that their menace is over. He does make three practical suggestions for Western help to Gorbachev. Reduce the burden of armaments; use economic aid for piecemeal development of parallel structures in a private sector operating on market principles so as to promote economic and then political pluralism, "encourage the change of Soviet realities, while leaving the old labels intact" as a concession to Soviet national pride.

Z would not leave the subversion of communism to the Hegelian cunning of history. He would want the capitalist countries to do the job by economic intervention.

Fukuyama and Z, despite their differences, have three fundamental points of agreement. The first is that the capitalist economic system and its liberal democratic ideology have triumphed. The second one is that communism is an anti-utopia which has done tremendous evil. The third is that Communist movement and the socialist states are incapable of rectification, renewal and advance. All the three fundamentals are false premises from which wrong conclusions are bound to be reached. The need to combat these wrong conclusions is because they cater to and strengthen prejudices implanted by the propaganda of the ruling circles of capitalist countries, utilising the errors and crimes of Stalinism and its Brezhnevite culmination. They also help to sustain illusions among the decision makers of these countries that given a little more toughness and intervention the Soviet Union and other socialist countries can be made to grovel before being eliminated. Both the prejudices and illusions mentioned above prevent the realisation of the new world of peace, cooperation and freedom of choice.

> *The passing of Marxism–Leninism first from China and then from the Soviet Union will mean its death as a living ideology of world historical significance. For while there may be some isolated true believers left in places like Managua, Pyongyang, or Cambridge, Massachusetts, the fact that there is not a single large state in which it is a going concern undermines completely its pretensions to being in the vanguard of human history. And the death of this ideology means the growing "Common Marketization" of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states.*
>
> From Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History?"

Anybody with the slightest nodding acquaintance with the history of capitalism would know that it has been qualitatively modified without, however, being transcended by socialism. Capitalism's first qualitative modification was when it entered the stage of monopoly and imperialism. Its second modification was when it accepted the need for constant and deliberate state intervention to offset the consequences of spontaneous market operations. In more recent times state intervention has gone together with the transnational control and regulation of markets. It is true that there has been a spectacular leap in producitivty because capitalism was able to integrate with the scientific technological revolution but not without painful consequences especially in the sphere of employment. Its development has also been because of its capacity to continue to pump out vast surpluses from the developing countries. With all its advance capitalism has not been able to

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avoid economic fluctuations. More importantly, it has the historic responsibility of using the atom bomb, of devastating Viet Nam and of bringing humanity to the very brink of total destruction.

Liberal democracy has an equally chequered history and limitations it has not been able to and cannot overcome. It started off with the congenital bloodstain of sustaining capitalist exploitation on its cheek. It went on to bless and benefit by imperialist exploitation of the overwhelming majority of mankind. It abetted the emergence of fascism and could be saved from total destruction only by allying with the Soviet Union. It was Viet Nam which saved it from subversion by the military industrial complex and the CIA.

Democracy is not to be confused with its partial, limited and limiting liberal form. Liberal democracy was not even the advocate of universal suffrage, was opposed to all forms of association, including trade unions and regarded women and the coloured peoples as being outside the pale of democracy. The democracy that has had an impact on capitalism and given rise to universal values is the democracy associated with socialism and anti-imperialist, anti-racist nationalism. This has taken birth in capitalist countries but as a challenge and as its grave digger.

> *As 1989 draws to a close, it is clear that it will enter history as the beginning of communism's terminal crisis, the year of the Second Great Break, but in the descending, not the ascending, phase of utopia in power; and this not just in Russia but from the Baltic to the China Sea, and from Berlin to Beijing. It is also clear that perestroika and glasnost, welcome as they are in their intention, have in their application only aggravated the systemic crisis they were intended to alleviate. And they have done so because like all forms of soft communism, they go against the logic of the system they are trying to save.*
>
> From Z's "To The Stalin Mausoleum"

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The history of scientific Communism starts at the end of 1847. In these nearly one-and-a-half centuries no other idea, theory and movement including its Soviet embodiment, has done more to change the wold and emancipate the oppressed, downtrodden and deprived. Freedom and history's best friend has been communism. The 1917 breakthrough, the defeat of fascism, the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, the collapse of colonialism, above all, the revolution in India, is due either directly to it or to movements associated with it. To fail to even mention these facts and to pontificate about the end of history or the terminal crisis of Communism is grotesque and even nauseating. It is not an error of perception but a crime of intention.

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The second fundamental error of Fukuyama and Z is their one sided presentation of the history of the Communist idea, theory, movement and, above all, its Soviet embodiment.

The history of scientific Communism starts at the end of 1847. In these nearly one-and-a-half centuries no other idea, theory and movement including its Soviet embodiment, has done more to change the wold and emancipate the oppressed, downtrodden and deprived. Freedom and history's best friend has been communism. The 1917 breakthrough, the defeat of fascism, the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, the collapse of colonialism, above all, the revolution in India, is due either directly to it or to movements associated with it. To fail to even mention these facts and to pontificate about the end of history or the terminal crisis of Communism is grotesque and even nauseating. It is not an error of perception but a crime of intention.

At the same time, the Communist movement has failed to reach its goal of an emancipated humanity. It has failed to prevent the committing of atrocious crimes by those who headed it for decades, above all against those who were its adherents and sympathisers. In a word, it failed to prevent the emergence and domination of Stalinism and as a system of views and methods of practice. The revolt against Das Kapital, i.e., mechanical determinism, which is how Gransci characterised the 1917 October Revolution, turned into a repudiation of Marxism. There are important historical circumstances which offer a partial explanation for this tragic phenomenon—the weakness of the world revolutionary forces, the savagery of counter-revolution and the backwardness of Russia and other components of what became the Soviet Union. But these are only partial explanations and by no means justify what happened.

Communism and the Communist movement cannot be identified with Stalinism. But it, too, is responsible for Stalinism. The reasons are many. But the most important is that in seeking to establish its own identity the Communist movement movement sought to prove its separateness from the rest of humanity. Stalin expressed this idea and mood in his oration at the funeral of Lenin—"we Communists are men of a special mould, we are made of special stuff." Following from this error was the apotheosis of the Party, the mystique around it and its leadership. To paraphrase Brecht, tragic the movement which needs only heroes. This separation from the rest of humanity in order to bring about its emancipation is not necessary for the establishment of hegemony or the organisation of a vanguard. There are shades of this exclusiveness in some of the polemics of Marx and more so in those of Lenin. But neither forgot that what they wished to created in thought and action was born from and had to be carried forward as part of the mainstream of civilisation. And both believed in the creative capacity of the masses and opposed substitution of them by the party.

Finally, the capacity of the Communists and the Soviet Union for rectification, renewal and advance. This capacity flows from the great emancipator role that the movement has played for the thought and the total living of vast millions of humanity. It flows from the fact that Communism is not only and not mainly Stalinism. And its history is also that of struggle against Stalinism. It is not for nothing that the main victims of Stalin were Communists. And that there were Communists like Dimitrov, Mao of the thirties and forties, Tito, Togliatti, Ho Chi Minh and Castro who successfully opposed the exclusiveness and mystifications of Stalin. Though not so successful because not so opposed to exclusiveness but outstanding by all standards, as leaders and thinkers hunted by Stalin, were Bukharin and Trostsky.

Besides, nothing that has happened vitiates the basic conclusion of Marx that capitalism had a beginning and has an end, that history's progress is towards socialism and communism and that the creative search and revolutionary endeavour of the masses for freedom and a true human condition would lead to a society free of exploitation and alienation and demanding universal men and women.

The Soviet perestroika articulates this impulse and urge. It has enormous difficulties to overcome. There are bound to be setbacks and failures. The necessity for its success is as undoubted and its possibility of success exists. History is on its side and time remains a refreshing viewer. ❑

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BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN ACTION

A. K. Damodaran

ANNEXATION OF THE PUNJAB

By Jagmohan Mahajan

Spantech Publishers Pvt., Ltd., New Delhi, 1989, pp.133, Rs. 150.00

The incorporation of the Sikh state into the Imperial system in north India can be seen today as the inevitable last step in the consolidation of the British rule in India. When the events were happening, however, month to month, skirmish to skirmish, and one complex treaty after the other, it did not appear to be a necessary progression of cause and effect. Jagmohan Mahajan's crisp, sharp narrative of the events between the end of the First Sikh War in 1842 and the annexation in 1846 gives us a detailed account of the several stages which led to the final treaty of Lahore and the exile of young Maharaja Dalip Singh and his mother to England. The great administrative and diplomatic achievements of Ranjit Singh had become only a memory now; a large number among the beneficiaries of his administrative genius saw in the British Raj a plausible enough excuse to retain their familial and clan affluence. This had been a continuing process. Since the great Maharaja had established a viable compromise in equal coexistence with the foreign power, there were always members of the feudal aristocracy who did not see the British in purely adversarial terms. The intrigues in the court, the rivalries between army commanders and the rebellious response of some among them to unreasonable demands from the foreigner led to a series of incidents and misunderstandings within the Sikh aristocracy and the Hindu-Muslim bureaucracy which was closely linked with it.

Mahajan's story is ideologically simple. His interior understanding of the thinking of the most sensitive British strategists in India enables him to trace a continuing link between the strategic approach of three Governor Generals, Ellenborough, Hardinge and Dalhousie. The hesitations and the realistic appreciation of the formidable professional quality of the Sikh soldier acted as a restraint on impetuous expansionism. Some brilliant local military commanders emerge on the scene, the most spectacular being Lord Gough. The tension between the awareness of the man on the spot of immediate opportunities and the natural caution of his bosses far away in Calcutta or in London is brought out very well. The great battles of the two Sikh campaigns have been described in great detail—from Sobraon to Chillianwalla and Gujarat. The Chillianwalla battle has its own unique personal complexion. The Governor General, Lord Hardinge, who had been a professional soldier of his life led his troops into the field and won an "evening battle fought by a brave old man in passion". In the first battle the Sikh army had suffered enormous casualities; at Chillianwalla, it was the British who suffered heavily.

These battles are of unusual interest to the students of military strategy. Mahajan succeeds in conveying an impression of foes evenly matched from the purely strategic angle; the outcome, however, in every single engagement was favourable to the British because of the divided, even fractured nature of the Lahore administration. This makes the tortuous tale of diplomacy and deceit indulged by the Company Raj and its local representatives more fascinating than the military story. From the very beginning Mahajan shows that there was no serious option in the British calculations other than the ultimate incorporation of the Punjab territory. After the first Sikh War three alternatives were considered: annexation, a subsidiary alliance relationship, and a treaty which would permanently alter the balance in favour of the British without any visible institutional change. The first option was rejected as difficult at that time when the resources were taken into account; the subsidiary alliance policy, it was felt, would only embroil the British in actions which they could not control; and so, inevitably, to that clever ploy of an unequal treaty with the British Resident ensconced in Lahore and effectively in charge of the Regency. The private correspondence between Sir Frederic Currie first in his capacity as the Foreign Secretary in Calcutta and later as the Resident in Lahore, makes it absolutely clear that the British were involved in a holding operation during the whole period. The aim was clear. The Punjab had to become a part of the Empire to ensure total security against the Afghans and the Russians behind them in the far distance. The assumption of power in the Punjab would lead to some corollaries like a more reliable system of control in the Sind and the Pathan provinces. It also would make it possible for Kashmir to be detached from Lahore.

Mahajan describes how the local rebellion in Multan was exploited to achieve this purpose. By now, Dalhousie was in position in Calcutta with his very clear policy of annexation, if possible. In the outer marches of the Empire no other solution could be permanent. For this purpose some duplicity was necessary to provoke rebellion among the War Lords who were not prepared to accept Lahore's comfortably subordinate status. And, thus, inexorably the Second Sikh War was manufactured. The real importance of this book is in demonstrating how the Second Sikh War was not by any definition a war between states at all. It was the story of external power intervening in the domestic difficulties of a sovereign country, fully utilizing the provisions of an earlier unequal treaty.

Apart from the limited Punjab interest and its significance for the future of the Raj, this book is most useful for a detailed story of the separation of Kashmir during the period between the two Sikh wars after the treaty of Lahore in March 1846. The detachment of a part of the Sikh Empire and its "sale" to the Dogra Commander, Gulab Singh, is familiar enough. Mahajan, however, brings out the genuine problems of patriotism and self-respect which bothered local leaders at that time when the headquarters in Lahore preferred the safer alternative. The non-annexation of Kashmir, Mahajan shows, was a necessity because of the incapacity of the British army to give logistical support in the distant mountains. Such an undertaking would have merited "a straight waistcoat and not a peerage". The man who comes out of the Kashmir embroglio with a certain degree of attractiveness is Sheikh Imamuddin, the Governor of Kashmir, who refused to accept orders from Lahore. He at least had self-respect. Sheikh Imamuddin was not alone. He claimed that he had been merely obeying the orders of Raja Lal Singh, Maharaja Dalip Singh's Wazir. The episode ends with the Raja being deposed from his wazarat. The Sheikh disappears from the scene and Gulab Singh takes over.

This is an exceptionally clear and detailed examination at the micro level of British imperialism in action at a major turning point of our history. The forties of the last century were crucial for the British presence in Asia. Again and again men like Hardinge see the Indian campaigns as not only being important in themselves but also as supportive of the British image in distant parts of the continent. It was a decade of major transitions. Persia had been successfully coerced into giving up its claims on Afghanistan and also its epochal friendly relationship with Russia. This was towards the end of the thirties. Also about the same time Afghan attempts to return to the Punjab had been successfully contained. Even more important was the totally unethical but effective manner in which the Sardars of the Sind had been defeated. It was a great period for unprincipled conquistadores because they were knowing less, inspite of

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all their prattle about international law and justice. Even that is not the whole story. The Punjab annexation comes only two or three years after the definitive treaty of Nanking which finally put an end to China's self-perception and behaviour as the "middle kingdom". With the annexation of the Punjab the British Empire was ready to meet new challenges from outside. Within 10 years, the challenge came from within the country in the heartland of Hindustan. The fortunes of the 'Mutiny' were profoundly affected by the successful manner in which the newly annexed state had been administered. The Sikh played no part in the various rebellions within the British Indian army. It was a question of insufficiently developed feelings of solidarity between former rival groups against the foreigner. In terms of group psychology there was not so much alienation as indifference. If the annexation had not been completed by Dalhousie there could have been effective latteral support to the mutineers from local leaders like Lal Singh. This was not an anticipated benefit. It was almost a case of serendipity. It was, however, destined to lead to many consequences, not the least of all being the composition of the post-1857 British Army. ❑

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LITTLE ABOUT GOD, ALL ABOUT POWER

Bhabani Sen Gupta

The overall impression left by this book on the reader's mind is of an India that is vibrant with its ethnic plurality. Numerous minorities are moving forward, however slow may be the movement at any given time for any given community. The many-pronged forward movement of the diverse minorities threatens the majority community which is finding its predominance erode gradually. This is the basic impetus for Hindu fundamentalism. It also derives velocity from other factors such as sunset of the ideology of the nationalist movement, decline of Nehruvian ideology and political and social values, authoritariasm in the style of Congress rule since the Emergency, breakdown of the single dominant party system and its emergent substitute—coalition government decline of left ideologies and limited advance of the left movement in India and many others.

RELIGION, STATE AND POLITICS IN INDIA

Edited by Moin Shakir

Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 504, Rs. 350.00

The revival of religion all over the world, not so much as a renewed means of man's communion with God as religion's arrogant and assertive intrusion into the realm of political power, has baffled scholars as well as ordinary men and women.

Fundamentalism is perhaps an ugly and inadequate phrase to describe the current wave of political fanaticism in the name of religion. Fundamental truths of all religions are basically the same; and they broadly renounce worldly pleasures and privileges and prescribe a life of rigorous quest for the ultimate truth. Islamic fundamentalisn has as little to do with the core teachings of the Prophet as has Hindu fundamentalism with the core teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita.

What we witness in the world today is a religious-political wave of radical activism in the name of God against a variety of targets depending upon in what particular political and social context is the battle joined. In Iran, the repressive policies systematised by the former Shah made effective political movements against his regime virtually impossible. The movement had to grow in the mosques. Its vanguard could be none other than religious leaders wearing the mantle of Islam.

The Ayotollah Khomenie waged a political struggle against American imperialism allied with the repressive and modernising regime of the late Reza Shah Pahlavi. The Iranian revolution succeeded where revolutionary activities conducted by the Tedeh party and other left groups proved to be miserable failure. Because the Khomeini revolution could topple a regime that was the mainstay of American imperialism in a crucial strategic region in West Asia, it was exalted to a very high altitude of power and glory by American publicists and scholars. Only a gigantic force of the size of a tornedo could have swept off the ramparts of American imperialism in Iran. Thanks to American propaganda, born partly out of fear and partly in self-defence, Islamic fundamentalism was cast in the role of a modern frankestein.

I do not for a moment defend Islamic or any other religious fundamentalism. My point is that insufficient efforts have so far been made to appreciate and penetrate the phenomenon of religiously oriented political movements in our time. The attempt is to club all religious fundamentalisms together and not to analytically differentiate them. Each religious-political movement is contextual, its growth and direction determined by the socioeconomic and political dy-

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namics of the given society. Thus, there are almost half a dozen Islamic fundamentalisms in today's Muslim countries. Hindu fundamentalism which is raising its head in India has little in common with its Islamic variety. Christian fundamentalism wears different shape and substance in different countries; and its manifestation in Latin America in the form of liberation theology draws the ire of the Pope. Buddhist fundamentalism in Sri Lanka is not a replica of Buddhist fundamentalism in Thailand or Japan.

The very fact that religion-based politics has emerged as a volatile phenomenon in several countries including India must, however, be taken into account. This phenomenon has to be subjected to sociological, political and psychological scrutiny. *Religion, State and Pllitics in India*, edited by the late Moin Shakir, who was for many years professor of political science at Marathwada University, Aurangabad, and who has left behind several studies of Islamic politics in India, is therefore, a timely addition to the steadily growing literature on Indian politics and society. Moin Shakir mobilised 25 scholars and analysts to write the book's as many chapters. Perhaps he was baffled by the diversity of religious manifestations of politics in India and thought that the phenomenon had to be discussed in its many interlinked manifestations. The result is stimulating but not satisfactory. The different chapters do stimulate our mind about the great variety of layers of fundamentalism, but hardly any one treats a particular aspect of the phenomenon to the satisfaction of the reader's curiosity.

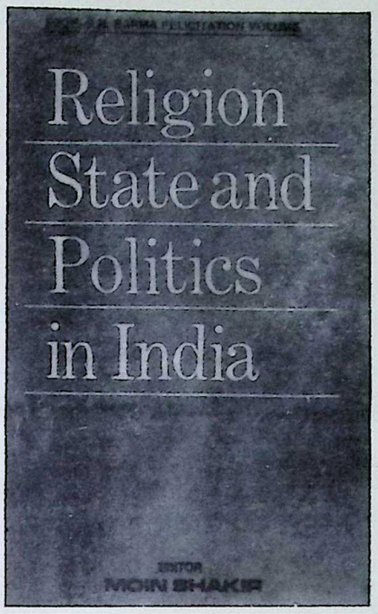
At the end of the papers, the basic question remains still unanswered. Why is the modern mind returning to religion? Why does the rationality of science and technology fail to give deeper satisfaction to the human mind? Why did communism fail to build a creative atheism in the Soviet Union and other hitherto socialist countries that could really replace the quest for God through religion? Why does the Church return triumphantly in Gorbachev's USSR?

For answers to these baffling questions, several paper-writers in this volume turn to Karl Marx. His famous interpretation of religion is quoted in a number of essays at different lengths. But is Marx the eternal answer or failure of an answer to the question: why should man turn to religion even when his material needs are met by a modern society, when he is liberated from the shackles of feudal or capitalist exploitation, is deeply under the influence of the rationalising forces of science and technology? What we know today but do not always wish to concede is that religion is not necessarily the opium of the people in the sense in which Marx used that oft-quoted aphorism. Religion is also the great tranquilliser in the madness of modern civilisation, even in its tumultous rationalism.

But religion in this case is an individual's communion with the God of his or her free or group choice. It does not intrude into politics except that it does influence the individual's attitude to politics. Politics of religious fundamentalism is a different matter altogether. Gail Omveldt, with whose brief paper opens the study, identifies two polar, mutually antagonistic political uses of religion. "We may see today's 'fundamentalism' and 'liberation theology' as conscious political projects, one of which seeks to consolidate and protect religion's conservative aspects, the other of which seeks to consolidate and expand religion's radical forms of expression and functions to join revolutionary movements.

Sure enough, but a highly unsatisfactory dichotomy. In Iran, we have witnessed the same religious movement play first a revolutionary role and then the role of conservation and consolidation of the gains. Indeed even in the post-liberation phase, Iranian fundamentalism has continued to retain a liberationist thrust—against the feudal lords of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates, indeed against the entire gaggle of conservative, basically pro-imperialist Arab rulers of the Middle East. At the same time it has restored the atavistic social norms of the past. Even this atavism is a kind of radical protest against Western materialism, a forced return to the rigours and simplicities of a long bygone past. In Iran, at any rate, Islamic fundamentalism has cast itself into a dual role, one opposed to the other. Its anti-imperialist thrust is a liberating force that has delivered the people of Iran from the binds of American imperialism and Reza Pahlavi type of militarist, oppressive, enforced modernism. At the same time, its atavistic social manifestations blockade the evolution of Iran into a liberal modern capitalist society and to that extent acts as a brake on history.

Neera Chandoke, citing the enlightening study of political and societal dynamics of religion by Peter L. Berger, makes the alarming statement that religion in its revivalist forms "challenges the legitimacy of the state." This too is an inadequate statement. If the state is an oppressive and regressive institution, the challenge to its legitimacy is not an undesirable thrust on the part of religious fundamentalism. Once again, one is reminded of the role of Iranian fundamentalism in overthrowing the state founded by the Pahlavis. However, fundamentalism also challenges the secular demo-



Unfortunately, however, secularism here, from the very start, has been made to wear a paradoxical garb, which, in effect, has robbed it of its true content. Although shipped from west like a host of modern concepts, secularism on the Indian soil underwent a transfer of meaning. Deft politicians twisted the humanistic idea into a convenient jargon, implying not the anti-religious, or the extra-religious, but rather a multi-religious approach.

In fact secularism, in a distorted sense, actually provided the founders of New India with a handy formula to allay and appease conflicting groups. Thus the constitution of the 'secular' State of India did not exclude religion; the special feature of our constitution is that it has tried to ensure religious disparity, to incorporate the right to retain separate religious social entities while acknowledging in the same breath the necessity of a secular uniformity.

From Rama Kundu's, "Common Civil Code" in *Religion, State and Politics.*

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cratic legitimacy of the state in several countries including India, where Hindu fundamentalists wish to convert the state into a Hindu state. More to the point is Berger's own analysis. The dynamics of modern development, whether they are found in developed or developing nations, tend to diminish and destroy institutions and values to which people have been deeply rooted for hundreds of years. The human mind is "liberated" without being given a safe alternative anchor. The vacuum thus created is often filled by religious cults and movements harking back to the bygone past, reviving the legends of stable social and moral regimes in which men and women were supposedly at peace with society. In other words, fundamentalism exploits the social, psychological as well as moral convulsions of rapid social change, and induces human beings to look for a better future in their ancient past.

Each of the papers in this book carries sparks of political, social and philosophical insight, but each, as already noted, leaves the leader with an unsatisfied curiosity. K.Raghevendra Rao examines the Nehruvian model of secularism both in its historical background and its manifestations in independent India. One of his conclusions is that in India, the social context sets severe limits to any practice of secularism (social here includes economic as well). In a country where every group considers every other group as unfair and thus implies its own unfairness, secularism looks like a near impossibility." More to the point is the failure of the state, that is, of the people in power, to maintain strict impartiality between one religion and another. In India of the last 20 years, the democratic secular rulers have been progressively leaning towards the dominant Hindu religion—not to its true spirit but to its icons, rituals and symbols, thereby provoking corresponding action by other religious groups.

T.K.Sharma's essay on religion and politics in India is a rather sketchy historical overview. His discovery, not a startling one, is that "there has always been a very close linkage between religion and politics from the earliest time to the present." The links have become stronger after independence and will not snap in a long while and not without strong secular struggles.

The bulk of the papers deal with local manifestations of religious fundamentalism. Four papers throw light on Sikh fundamentalism in Punjab. While Harish Puri writes about religion and politics in Punjab as a historical continuum, and shows how they have interacted with one another, each profoundly influencing the other, M.S.Dhami offers an interesting analysis of the religious dynamics of the 1985 elections to the Punjab legislature. Satya Pal Dang brings his Marxist persuasions to bear upon a readable analysis of Hindu politics in Punjab, while Gurbhagat Singh throws light on the politics of cultural associations both Sikh and Hindu to show how deeply meshed is culture with religion.

There are several other interesting papers. Ajit Roy puts the RSS under a rigorous Marxist scrutiny and opens up its amorphous social and economical base which is by no means static. Three papers are devoted to Maharashtra. One of them, written by Gopal Guru, examines the role of Buddhism in Maharashtra politics. A.H.Doctor's essay on the Parsis makes charming reading. P.M. Mathew shows the interaction of Christianity and politics largely in Kerala. R.Srinivasan writes about communal politics in Tamil Nadu. Recent conversions to Islam in Tamil Nadu is treated sociologically and politically by George Mathew, while Valerian Rodrigues's topic is the role of the Catholic Church in Dakshin Kannada.

Three macro-papers deserve special mention. Asghar Ali Engineer, the warhorse of secular politics in Bombay, who has been keeping the state of the Muslim society in India under continuing clinical survey, has contributed a paper in this volume on Islam in India's multi-religious society. Once again, Engineer builds the image of benign, tolerant, compassionate, inclusive Islam, which is in contrast with fundamentalism. He correctly writes that "As far as our country is concerned, it is not the practice of religion that causes acute problems but the assertion of religious community identity that does... In a democratic set-up where votes and numbers count, such an assertion provides a religious community with an important leverage. The political and religious elite within the community promote this sense of religious identy more and more aggressively. Such an attitude starts an unhealthy competition between rival communities for assertion of their respective identities leading to severe communal strain." In Engineer's analysis, then, fundamentalism is part of the Indian democratic process; it is a *political* thrust of communal aspirations and has very little to do with religion.

Rama Kundu's essay on a common civil code deals extensively with the Supreme Court judgement on the famous Shah Bano case. The issue touched a raw nerve of Indian secularism and exposes its contradictions. For political expediency, the country's uniform civil code does not apply to the Muslim community. Kundu affirms that this contradiction has robbed Indian secularism of its "true content." It "actually provided the founders of New India with a handy formula to allay and appease conflicting groups." That's true. But could it have been different? The polarised politics of the pre-independence decade, the partition, and the consequent population upheavals made it exceedingly difficult for the leaders to enforce a common civil code on the very large Muslim community that was neither ready nor equipped for secular change. Kundu concedes this at the end of the essay. In India, "we have to do the work piecemeal, step by step. It's a very difficult task indeed! But is there any other alternative?

This review concludes with a note on Bashiruddin Ahmed's fine-grained analysis of the "Muslim Problem." He poses the basic dilemma: should India handle the problem of multi-ethnicity with an elightened recognition of plurality or with an aggressive design of assimilation? India, he rightly points out, has opted for the former. Bashiruddin shows how the Constitution has crafted a pluralistic society and carpentered a legal framework for their peaceful competitive co-existence. If there are still tensions and conflicts, often gory, it is because the actual political and social process is larger than the framework laid out by the Constitution. Building of multi-ethnic nation is no easy job; even the command-control Soviet system hasn't really worked and is now being severely strained by assertive nationalism. The Muslims are not just another minority in India. More than 100 million strong, India has the world's third largest Muslim population. Bashiruddin shows with the help of the data revealed in an opinion poll how diverse is the community's own outlook about its political status, about how it should mobilise to compete with other large population groups, how it can develop and deploy its distinctive identity to secure and expand its sociopolitical gains.

His brief picture of the Muslims shows a community that is far from static. Indeed the Muslims in India have been coming out of their centuries-long social and political backwardness, and steadily joining the national milieu. This is indeed remarkable because there is tremendous resistance of the predominantly Hindu society to let the Muslims move forward.

The overall impression left by this book on the reader's mind is of an India that is vibrant with its ethnic plurality. Numerous minorities are moving forward, however slow may be the movement at any given time for any given community. The many-pronged forward movement of the diverse minorities threatens the majority community which is finding its predominance erode gradually. This is the basic impetus for Hindu fundamentalism. It also derives velocity from other factors such as sunset of the ideology of the nationalist movement, decline of Nehruvian ideology and political and social values, authoritariasm in the style of Congress rule since the Emergency, breakdown of the single dominant party system and its emergent substitute——coalition government decline of left ideologies and limited advance of the left movement in India and many others.

It is remarkable that hardly any of the contributors to this volume takes an apocalyptic view of India's multiethnic future. Religion is creating political problems, but at least here is a group of scholars who do not see the Indian secular democratic system collapsing under the strains. These scholars are refreshingly free of paranoia. ❑

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DISPOSSESSED BY HISTORY

A. H. H. Abidi

CHEATED BY THE WORLD: THE PALESTINIAN EXPERIENCE

By Punyapriya Dasgupta

Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 367, Rs. 150.00

The title of the book under review has been derived from the murmur of a Palestinian writer. According to the author the idea of the study occurred in the midst of Israel's bitter war in the Lebanon in 1982. The author is a well-known Indian journalist who served as a press correspondent for seven years in West Asia and North Africa. During the stint he developed acquaintance with the Palestinian problem and, over the years, this interest grew into the conviction, widely shared, that historical and monumental injustice has been done to the people of Palestine since the 1920s. The book has a wide span as it traces the central problem from its origin and follows its ramifications right upto the 18th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) in April 1987. Its twenty chapters cover most of the important aspects of the problem.

Punyapriya Dasgupta makes it clear that although more and more people are now inclined to see the truth in the Palestine problem, the Palestinians' tragedy has been that they were, and are, buffetted and exploited by others, used as instruments and pawns of policy, and unable to counteract world-wide disinformation campaign mounted all through. He asserts that almost the whole world helped—by design or error—in the usurpation of their land and the dispossession of the Palestinians. Dasgupta does not ignore either the weaknesses of the Palestinian national movement such as fantastic rhetorics and there being neither policy-makers nor coterie around them, or the serious schisms, rivalries and rifts among the Palestinian leaders who also cheated. What emerges prominent is that despite their international cohesion and clout, the Zionists, on their own strength, could neither take over Palestine nor could they obliterate the Palestinian people nor erase the Palestinian problem. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), though shaken, has not broken apart. The Palestinian people have shown remarkable instinct of self-preservation.

In its present-century diasporas, the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) has undergone a traumatic metamorphosis. In the early phase, the Palestinians were sidelined and their problem was inter-Arabized as non-Palestinian Arabs moved in to exploit it for their parochial ends. The suffering Palestinians were obscured and they remained so for seventeen long years when, in 1964, they decided to take their destiny into their own hands and the PLO emerged phoenix-like as the spearhead of the PRM. A legitimate question is: why did it not arise earlier? For four years, the PLO was a "dubious body" under "undependable" Ahmad Shukeiry. When Yasser Arafat appeared at the helm, other Arab leaders were wary of him. It is notable that whereas the Arab masses have been sympathetic to and supportive of the Palestinians, the regimes, by and large, remained calculating. The author sees the surreptitious Israeli hand in such an attitude leading to the decimation of the Palestinians. It became evident in Jordan and the Lebanon. President Sadat's peace initiative with Israel proved his conviction that Palestinians were expendable.

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This book traces the history of the Palestinian problem from its early beginnings after the First World War and the Palestine Mandate to the present, from the days of terrorist activity. The author discusses the radicalization of the Palestine calling attention to the suffering of the Palestinians, leading to the not inconsiderable volume of literature supporting the Palestinian cause. A heartening feature is the discussion on dissident groups within Israel which are attempting to reach out to the dispossessed Palestinians, acknowledging their right to this 'promised land'.

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The Palestinians drew little comfort from the umpteen UN resolutions which were either flouted by Israelis or interpreted variously. The US remained firm in supporting Israel's intransigence. As regards the Soviet attitude to the Palestinian problem, the author holds that it fluctuated and he wonders as to "why the Russians, in spite of the clearest anti-Zionist position, adopted by Marxism throughout history, chose to throw their considerable weight behind the creation of Israel . . . . ." Although giving some well-known reasons he considers it a "mystery nobody, even today, has been able to explain definitively." The oil weapon and the Euro-Arab dialogue fell short of the Palestinians' demands and expectations. The "Angels" in the Non-Aligned Movement were also ineffective.

Being disillusioned with the international fora, Arafat gradually veered to the idea of engineering a negotiated peace settlement in which recognition of Israel was implicit. He also reposed greater hope and faith in the US good offices. Arafat accordingly dressed up the position of the PLO although he has had detractors.

Although the PRM remains in the "dark tunnel" the author perceives signs of a possible breakthrough in certain bridge-building movements and individuals that opens prospects for hope and fulfillment of the long-cherished dream of peaceful homelands for the two peoples.

Since the time the book was completed, momentous developments such as the Intifadah, proclamation of the State of Israel, and Arafat's unprecedented peace offensive occurred in quick succession. In spite of the author's "Update" they could not be covered adequately. That is understandable and one hopes that Dasgupta has already planned the sister volume.

The present book is an extremely useful contribution to the existing volume of literature on the subject. Its merit is that it reflects the Third World perspective. Apart from being a study of the Palestinian problem it is also an account of Zionism—its mythology, history, and methods. Dasgupta has excelled in mixing his journalistic expertise and personal observations, contacts, and experiences with deft scholarship. He has a lucid style. The book is admirably produced.

Lastly, the present reviewer should point out an obvious factual error in the 16th chapter. Writing about President Kennedy's "principled stand against Israel's immoral politics", the author adds that "...certain facts testify that after his election *for the second term* he saw the injustice done to the Palestinian refugees. . . ." (p. 269). One wishes the Expert Reader of the manuscript had detected and corrected it!

There are few parallels in history to the injustice done to the Palestinians or indeed to the courage with which they have borne their travails. ❑

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JUSTICE DELAYED . . . .

Raju Ramachandran

VALIANT VICTIMS AND LETHAL LITIGATION: THE BHOPAL CASE

By Upendra Baxi and Amita Dhanda

Published by Indian Law Institute, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 379, Rs. 350.00

If the tragedy was macabre, the course of the litigation has been bizarre. Five and a half years after the event, the victims of the world's worst industrial disaster are still to receive compensation. At the time when this review appears the Supreme Court will be on vacation. When it reopens in July, the hearings in the petitions challenging the settlement of February 1989 will be resumed. Fortunately, the V.P. Singh Government has decided to provide some succour to the victims by giving interim relief to the residents of the 36 severely affected wards of Bhopal.

The book under review is the third in the series of works produced by the Indian Law Institute on the Bhopal Case. Each of the books contains a collection of documents pertaining to the litigation. The first one (*Mass Disaster and Munltinational Liability: The Bhopal Case) was published in May 1986 at a stage when the suit filed by the Union of India against* the Union Carbide Corporation was pending before Judge John F. Keenan of the United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Judge Keenan was to decide whether he would assume jurisdiction or refuse to take up the case on the ground of forum non conveniens and send the case to India for trial. It was a situation bristiling with "extraordinary inversions", to borrow Baxi's exquisite phrasing. The Government of India, in order to justify its decision to file the suit in America denigrated the Indian legal system, and it was left to Union Carbide to sing paeans of praise about the Indian legal system, with N.A. Palkhivala and J.B. Dadachanji filing affidavits in its support. At that stage Baxi had said in his introduction: "This much is clear: vindication of community interests requires that the Bhopal Litigation must be allowed to proceed on merits: absolutely unmoved by the blandishments and pressures for an out of Court settlement. At issue is the absolute multinational enterprrise liability for avoidable human suffering and the mimmal human obligation on the part of multinationals to take human life and environment everywhere seriously".

On 12th May 1986 Judge Keenan decided to dismiss the suit and send the case to India for trial, taking the view that the Indian courts were in a far better position than the American courts to determine the cause of the tragedy and thereby fix liability. Judge Keenan referred to the Government of India's contention that the Indian justice system had not yet cast off the burden of colonialism to meet the emerging needs of a democratic people (! !) and said, "In the court's view, to retain the litigation in this forum, as plaintiff's request would be yet another example of imperialism, another situation in which an established sovereign inflicted its rules, its standards and values, on a developing nation. This Court declines to play such a role. The Union of India is a world power in 1986, and its courts have the proven capacity to mete out fair and equal justice. To deprive the Indian judiciary of this opportunity to stand tall before the world and to pass judgement on behalf of its own people would be to revive a history of subservience and subjugation from which India has emerged. India and its people can and must vindicate their claims before the independent and legitimate judiciary created there since the independence of 1947. This Court defers to the adequacy and ability of the courts of India."

In his introduction to the second book (*Inconvenient Forum and Convenient Catastrophe : The Bhopal Case*) Baxi had suggested that Judge Keenan's decision be challenged in appeal. It was, but unsuccessfully.

The suit was then filed in the Court of the District Judge of Bhopal in September 1986. Judge Deo, an imaginative District Judge made a path-breaking order in December 1987 directing Carbide to pay Rs. 350 crores as interim compensation. To the argument of Carbide that there was no earlier case in the history of the law of torts where such interim compensation had been granted, Judge Deo replied, quoting Lord Denning in Packer *V Packer*, "if we never do anything which has not been done before, we shall never get anywhere. The law will stand still, whilst the rest of the world goes on and that will be bad for both".

Predictably, Carbide went in appeal to the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which reduced the compensation to Rs. 250 crores in August 1988. The Governmment of India challenged the reduction of interim compensation and Carbide challenged the grant of any interim compensation, by moving the Supreme Court. No stay was granted by the apex court, but Carbide did not pay. In February 1989, in the course of hearings, in the case relating to interim compensation, the Supreme Court directed settlement of the main suit for 470 million US Dollars. A massive public outcry followed. Serious doubts were raised about the adequacy of the settlement amount. Admittedly, the victim groups had not been heard before the settlement. The Supreme Court was yet to hear the challenge to the constitutional validity of the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Registration and Processing of Claims) Act, 1985 which gave to the Government of India the exclusive right to represent the vic-

If the tragedy was macabre, the course of the litigation has been bizarre. Five and a half years after the event, the victims of the world's worst industrial disaster are still to receive compensation. At the time when this review appears the Supreme Court will be on vacation. When it reopens in July, the hearings in the petitions challenging the settlement of February 1989 will be resumed. Fortunately, the V.P. Singh Government has decided to provide some succour to the victims by giving interim relief to the residents of the 36 severely affected wards of Bhopal.

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tims. If that Act was unconstitutional, the whole settlement would have to go. Under the settlement, criminal proceedings against Carbide stood quashed. Apart from question of the legality of such quashing, the settlement put the Gooverment of India in a piquant situation: it was to defend Carbide in criminal proceedings. Review petitions were filed challenging the settlement.

While the review petitions were pending, another Bench of the Supreme Court (the "Validity Bench" for short) began hearing the challenge to the constitutionality of the Act. As that Bench was concluding its hearing, the "Settlement Bench" pronounced reasons in support of its order directing settlement. The main reason for directing settlement, the Court said, was the urgent need for interim relief. The Court, in effect, upheld the stand of the previous Government before Judge Keenan, when it observed, "The laws" delays are indeed, proverbial. It had been the unfortunate bane of the judicial process that even ordinary cases, where evidence consists of a few documents and the oral testimony of a few wtinesses, require some years to realise the fruits of litigation. This is so even in cases of great and unquestionable urgency such as fatal accident actions brought by the dependents. These are hard realities. The present case is one where damages are sought on behalf of the victims of a mass disaster, and, having regard to the complexities and the legal questions involved, any person with an unbiased vision would not miss the time consuming prospect for the course of the litigation in its sojourn through the various courts, both in India and later in the United States".

> The February settlement surrendered this great initiative, substituting judicial fatigue for judicial creativity as a response. . . . either way, the decision would have contributed to the jurisprudence of multinational liability for mass disasters. Judicial escapism has deprived us of this endowment.

In December 1989, the Validity Bench upheld the Act, but read into it the duty of the Government to provide interim relief and to hear the victims before the settlement. The Court, however, made further observations on the settlement itself (which it ought not to have done, since the reference to the Bench was on the sole question of the validity of the Act) and indicated that it was permissible to do "a little wrong" in order to do a "great right".

Now the Review Bench has commenced its hearings on the challenge to the settlement. The legal issues thrown up by the settlement threaten to overshadow the issues raised in the main suit against Carbide. But the fact that there is confusion is not a matter for lament: this is the first case of its kind, and there are no perfect answers.

The book under review comes at the right time. It updates the documentation and, along with its two earlier companions, serves as a complete handbook for anyone concerned with the Bhopal litigation. Upendra Baxi's 69-page Introduction is a master-piece of analysis. He does not hide his anguish over the February settlement. He commends India's enunciation of the principle of multinational enterprise liability, but laments, that "the February settlement surrendered this great initiative, substituting judicial fatigue for judicial creativity as a response. This is not to say at all that the Indian judiciary should have on due consideration produced any resounding affirmation of the self-evident nature of the principle of absolute multinational liability. It might have negated or trimmed it. Either way, the decision would have contributed to the jurisprudence of multinational liability for mass disasters. Judicial escapism has deprived us of this endowment".

Baxi points out that neither the February settlement orders nor the Supreme Court's order of 4th May setting out the reasons for the settlement refers to the available scientific evidence on short, medium and long term effects of the MIC exposure. The settlement, he says, does not take into account the following issues:

a) who counts as a victim?
b) what is one a victim of?
c) are all victims similarly victimized?
d) how many were there who needed or were eligible for the final relief?
e) is monetary, notionally allocated financial relief all theree is to relief in such a mass disaster?

In addition to these questions and the question of the legality of quashing criminal liability, which the Settlement Bench has itself recognised as meriting consideration, Baxi also finds fault with the arithmetic which was used to justify the settlement.

> The notion of *obiter dicta* structures judicial law saying: it is not a charter for judicial indiscipline. Judicial discipline a valued resource for rights, justice and progress in development of the law by judges—Judicial incoherence violates the minima of justice according to the law and the rule of law standards.

Baxi comes down heavily on the Validity Bench for making observations on the settlement beyond the scope of the reference to it. He says, "It is simply not enough to say that these observations are at best or worst *obiter dicta:* In legal logic, *obiter* has to have some rational relevance, though not sufficient to belong to the realm of the ration, to issues at hand. The validity of the settlement was not such an issue. Nor was the Bench at all constituted for allowing the victims to have their say on matters outside the sole question referred to it. The notion of *obiter dicta* structures judicial law saying: it is not a charter for judicial indiscipline. Judicial discipline is a valued resource for rights, justice and progress in development of the law by judges—Judicial incoherence violates the minima of justice according to the law and the rule of law standards".

To be fair to the Supreme Court, it has never claimed to be infallible. In its order of May 4, it says that it is setting out its reasons so that those who have sought a review may be able effectively to assist the court in satisfactorily dealing with the case. It acknowledges that like all other human institutions it is fallible, but assures us that "those who trust this Court will not have cause for despair". Baxi's trenchant criticism will be of help to all those who are involved in persuading the Coourt that it erred. ❑

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CORPORATE WISDOM

Makarand Paranjape

RELIEF AND EXPERIENCE: VIEWS FROM THE TOP OF INDIAN MANAGEMENT

Edited by Arabinda Ray

UCS Consultants, Calcutta, 1989, pp 118, Rs. 100.00

Jay Dubashi, the well-known business columnist, once lamented the paucity of biographies of Indian businessmen and enterpreneurs. His remarks were made in the context of the astounding success of Lee Iacocca's books. The sales of the autobiographies alone would make its already wealthy and legendary author a millionaire many times over. Dubashi's point, however, was not about money alone but about role models. He considered India's businessmen to be as talented and inspiring as their American counterparts, but regretted the fact that the public knew so little about them and their values.

This book is not biographical, nor is it about top businessmen or industrialists. But it goes a great way towards filling the void that Dubashi spoke of. This book is about some of the best of India's professional managers and what makes them tick. It is about their values and philosophy of life and hence an account of the secret springs of their phenomenal success and achievement. Besides the introduction by the editor of the volume, Arabinda Ray, the collection contains eleven free-flowing, informal and usually autobiographical essays by some of India's most distiguished executives—P.L. Tandon, H.T. Parekh, R.H. Mody, N.P. Sen, V. Kurien, A.N. Haksar, V. Krishnamoorthy, T. Thomas, S.S. Nadkarni, A.S. Ganguly, and Gurcharan Das—a veritable who's who of India's top managers.

In his introduction Ray provides a rationale for the book. He argues that the tradition of professional excellence in management fosters national integration and serves as an important instrument of modernisation. He paints an attractive picture of the profession of management, holding up a belief in high values and an unrelenting quest for quality as the goals that a young manager should strive for. In addition, he stresses the social responsibility that must go with success, especially in a poor country such as India. These are the qualities that he discovers to be the common denominators in the careers of the contributors.

The best essay in the piece is undoubtedly that of Prakash Tandon, who is perhaps the doyen of Indian managers. He was chairman of Hindustan Lever from 1961-1988, held several other distinguished positions, and is the author of classics such as *Punjabi Century* and *Punjab Saga*. He is as well known all over the world for his achievement in letters as he is for his achievements as a manager in the business circles of India. Tandon's is the longest and most thoughtful essay in the book, though some people may consider his tone pompous. He starts with a definition of professionalism, and then provides a historical perspective of professionalism in India. He then goes on to offer his views on the Indian manager and those qualities which he has and those he needs to cultivate. Tandon's analysis is penetrating; he is never content with cliches and platitudes, but goes to the root of the problem. Consider his reading of the basic ambivalence and contradiction in the life of the Indian manager, the conflict as he calls it between "Dharam" and "Karam":

> We will go to temples, raise temples, lead a deeply religious life; but when we go to work, we can exploit ruthlessly and make money out of a famine; and promptly put part of the money into a temple or a college, and sometimes make money out of both.

Such contradictions run right down the fabric of Indian society and are responsible for the terrible disparities which plague our country. Tandon concludes his essay with an outline of the qualities that make up the "man at the top:"

> The man at the top has also to acquire a certain aloofness, call it loneliness. This is often misunderstood. He has to learn to keep his own counsel in many matters, which if conveyed, even to his close colleagues, may create anxieties. Like a shock absorber he has to absorb the impacts from without and not transmit them automatically to the organisation. ...Somehow, he must rise above the common cliches of optimism-pessimism but believe in realism.

This essay confirms the idea that Tandon is an exceptionally gifted man as not only a "doer," but also as a "thinker."

The same cannot be said of another legend in Indian management, Russi Mody, the supremo of the largest private sector company in India, the venerable Tata Iron and Steel Company. His essay is disappointingly trite, though his emphasis on the humanitarian obligations of management is well taken. He ends his short essay with a homily on "3 Cs"—"Credibility, Compassion, and Courage" which he sums up as the essence of a good Chairman. This reminds one of the pep talk we got in locker rooms before a game, a lot of simple-minded, public school philosophy which we soon discovered was practically useless in the rough and tumble of the real world. However talented Mody might be, his gifts are not reflected in this essay.

What is true of Mody also applies to a majority of the remaining essays. Most of the managers stress the same things: idealism, courage, sincerity, honesty, social commitment, humility, and so on as the qualities that they, and by implication a successful manager must have. However, what makes their essays unconvincing is their inability to apply these abstractions to real events or to provide a convincing analysis of what is happening to our country today. In fact, the lack of clarity and originality in many of the essays underscores the suspicion that rising to the top of a company or bureaucracy often entails an ossification and deadening of one's intellect and creativity. The essays abound in generalizations and cliches. They fail to convey a personal voice and often end up sounding like brochures or pamphlets.

H.T. Parekh's piece is full of gems like, "Government's role must not be to regulate and control industry but facilitate development and expansion," "Poverty and unemployment go together," and "Sense of social responsibility in business should be encouraged, even forcibly to some extent". Wise words, no doubt, but without adequate elaboration and exemplification, quite unconvincing.

N.P. Sen's essay is similarly replete with "I believes"—for instance, "I believe management has an obligation to find gainful employment for everybody it has employed". The redundancy and careless phrasing of this sentence is characteristic of the entire article. Such an unimaginative and predictable essay does not become a former Principal of the Administrative Staff College of India.

A.N. Haksar's article is written equally badly, though its autobiographical indulgences make it

This book is not biographical, nor is it about top businessmen or industrialists. But it goes a great way towards filling the void that Dubashi spoke of. This book is about some of the best of India's professional managers and what makes them tick. It is about their values and philosophy of life and hence an account of the secret springs of their phenomenal success and achievement. Besides the introduction by the editor of the volume, Arabinda Ray, the collection contains eleven free-flowing, informal and usually autobiographical essays by some of India's most distiguished executives—P.L. Tandon, H.T. Parekh, R.H. Mody, N.P. Sen, V. Kurien, A.N. Haksar, V. Krishnamoorthy, T. Thomas, S.S. Nadkarni, A.S. Ganguly, and Gurcharan Das—a veritable who's who of India's top managers.

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slightly more interesting. He has sentences which begin like this: "Firstly, the influence of guide-posts in life which were a family legacy and circumstance of birth. . . .". How can guide-posts influence and how can "family legacy" and "circumstance of birth" be guide-posts? Doesn't such careless writing indicate careless thinking habits?

V. Krishnamoorthy, the much lauded chairman of SAIL, harps on "Human Resource Development" and "Quality" in his essay. The latter becomes a kind of all-purpose buzz word, a panacea for all ills. However, the author defines it in a somewhat naive and romantic way:

> "To me, quality is an inner resolve to do one's job, no matter how routine and rule-bound it many seem and to do it better each succeeding day. . . . to impart to each element of a job an intangible aura, a perfection. . . Our work should glow with the inner illumination that is the result of a labour of love."

It would be very hard to practise this if one were an assembly line worker.

T. Thomas's "An International Manager" reads like a speech. He offers a Swiftean "modest proposal" to overcome India's ills:

1. Abolish/wind up public sector industry and bring in privatisation;
2. Population control in some form—not by coercion but by persuasion, education..

Haven't we heard these ideas before? Don't they smack of an extreme right-wing, capitalist programme of social change, betraying a total insensitivity to India's past? The rest of Thomas's remarks are autobiographical and the title seems to apply only to the author's present status, not to the content of the essay.

S.S. Nadkarni's insights begin with some "Old-Time Virtues" to which he attributes his success, "HARD WORK," "INTEGRITY," "ETHICS," and "SINCERITY". Perhaps the bold type heightens the author's faith in them, but surely "INTEGRITY" and "ETHICS" overlap? A personal ethics could include all the other the features, surely. Neither Nadkarni nor A.S. Ganguly, whose essay, "The Scientist's Drive Towards Social Justice" follows, have anything new to say.

That leaves two essays, Verghese Kurien's "The Grass Roots Professional" and Gurcharan Das's "Leading from the Front" I like both of them, though the title of the latter is a bit silly—where else can one lead from except the front? Both essays are autobiographical and opinionated, Kurien's slightly arrogant in tone, but it is this personal quality and conviction which makes them valuable. Kurien tells us a little about how both circumstances and personal choices led him to the challenge of Anad and the subsequent successes of "Operation Flood." He stresses the personal job satisfication and meaningful work over monetary rewards:

> Making "green shampoo" is a triviality, particularly in a country where there is not enough water to drink. There is some absurdity in the young Indian spending his talent in the pursuance of clothes, cosmetics and the like.

I only hope that some of our young managers agree! The nation would be grateful to them if they employed their talents to solving its problems instead of automatically opting for the high-profile yuppie lifestyles that are so conspicuous in their self-assertiveness.

Das, who runs Proctor and Gamble, India, is also a writer. He wrote the prize-winning play, *Larins Saheb*, and more recently a novel, *A Fine Family*. Das emphasizes the value that businessmen need to place on the individual, both within the organization and outside it. In the latter instance, the consumer is king and Das believes that the product must satisfy those millions of housewives who use them. Within the organization, a respect for the individual worker translates into a delegation of responsibility, an environment of trust, the sharing of information—in short, of teamwork. If I were a young manager, I would like to work for a boss like Das.

The best thing about his book is that it is a beginning in a very important direction. It is thoroughly readable and should be compulsory for aspiring managers as well as established managers. The real significance of a book like this is the role it can play in the formation of a healthy, viable, innovative, and progressive corporate culture because it is, ultimately, about successful people and what makes them so. Hence, it is about values and philosophies, not just about careers. I only wish that a book about professionalism in Indian management had been edited and produced more professionally; the book would improve if the Publisher's Preface were deleted, if the form, structure, and style of the articles, including the headings and titles, were rationalised and standardised, and if the printing was more attractive. ❑

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AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SHELTER ISSUES

S. K. Sharma

METROPOLITAN HOUSING MARKET:
A STUDY OF AHMEDABAD

Edited by Meera Mehta and Dinesh Mehta

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 208, Rs. 180.00

Metropolitan Housing Market—A Study of Ahmedabad is an excellent and timely contribution to the growing literature on shelter issues in the recent years. It is one of the few books to date that comprehensively addresses itself to a detailed analysis of a local housing market, at the same time placing the study in a broader national perspective. The professional expertise apparent in dealing with the subject is unique in its multi-disciplinary appeal. By integrating uncanny insights into the physical and spatial as well as the socio-economic aspects of the housing situation, it invites the interests of economists, architects, planners and policy-makers.

The stated objectives of the study are to help in the identification of housing strategies and programmes at the local level and also provide significant guidelines for national and state level policies. The study becomes significant in the context of the recent changes occurring in the national policy perspective—especially the shift in the role of state from one of a provider to that of a facilitator of housing.

Given that state intervention strategies lie on the supply side, most of the existing literature on housing markets, tend to focus on the demand side of the equation while fewer studies have looked at both supply and demand aspects. Fully recognising this need, the authors examine both the supply processes and the demand behaviour and their interaction under various changing sets of conditions on the basis of a stratified sample survey undertaken in Ahmedabad.

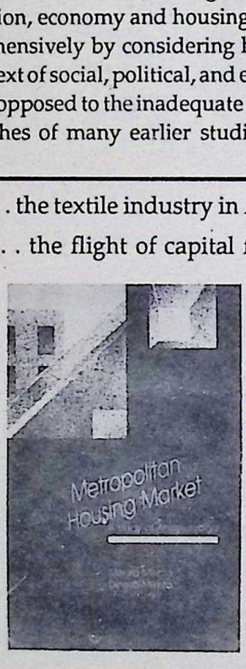
The authors begin by critically reviewing India's housing policies including those related to the informal sector. The political dimension to the urban housing market with particular reference to self-help is emphasised. They observe that there are certain contradictions in the entire approach to the housing policies in India reflecting not only the conflicting attitudes of planners and academicians but also the dependence of housing policies on political forces as much or even more than the techno-economic solutions to issues of rising prices and unaffordabilities. They consider that illegal settlements act as a safety valve to social tension and that the state through action or inaction tends to reflect the interests of the establishment. Such a radical view on the self-help debate, is often subject to criticism for a preoccupation with the structural processes on an abstract level.

The authors examine the growth of the city population, economy and housing situation very comprehensively by considering housing within the context of social, political, and economic structures as opposed to the inadequate demand-based approaches of many earlier studies. The trends identified show that the housing activity in Ahmedabad was governed by the fortunes of the textile industry and the related economic health of the city. Further, the authors throw up an interesting insight into the interrelationship between land, economy and housing while examining the impact of the Urban Land (Ceiling Control) Act of the 1976 on the housing situation in Ahmedabad.

In examining the contribution of the various segments of suppliers, the authors develop a detailed typology of housing sub-markets that takes into consideration the actors and activities involved, the commodity type and the ways and means adopted for its production as also the prevalent housing types in the local market. A similar sub-typology is developed within the informal market. Some interesting observations have been made in this regard. The study reveals that the most dominant sub-markets in Ahmedabad have been the formal private sector and the informal sector, despite the intensified public sector housing efforts in the last decade. The private sector's role has increased to such an extent that it outfaced even the informal sector in this process. "....in the 1971-81 decade, the private sector contributed almost 60 per cent to the net decade increase compared to just 20 per cent by the informal sector .... Contrary to the experiences of other cities, the role of slum housing in Ahmedabad has declined in the last decade...." Within the formal private sector, the trends are towards "a growing importance of the private commercial sector, at the expense of more genuine popular sector with housing organised and built by the housing co-operatives consisting of the community or users themselves". More than the commercialization of the formal private sector, the authors note the increasing role of the growing petty-capitalist class in the formal housing market that has strong links to the local polity. Their criticism of this pattern of development in terms of the loss of popular control over housing for a large proportion of the population and the gradual 'commodification' of the housing product does not seem to appreciate the affordability levels, the flexibility of procedures and the locational advantages that it provides showing a less pragmatic and more ideological viewpoint. Also the study does not attempt to understand the reasons for their success or the relative costs of what they provide compared to other sub-markets.

In the context of housing demand behaviour, the need for comparative work is becoming increasingly important as more and more cities are

> .... the textile industry in Ahmedabad was probably at its peak in the early seventies .... the flight of capital from textiles started in the second half of seventies. This provided a boost to the upcoming housing industry in the city, which had begun in the early seventies but flourished during the later half .... at the same time, the speculative demand in housing was probably quite high. This was because the substantial rise in prices during the seventies ensured a high return from capital gains. On one hand then, these factors probably led to a high level of housing investment in the city, which was also backed by a consumption-based demand. The latter was probably steady as despite moderate population growth rates, incomes were high and access to institutional financing through the co-operative sector was ensured, especially for the upper and middle classes.
>
> From *Metropolitan Housing Market: A Study of Ahmedabad*



S. K. Sharma, a civil servant by profession, is the chairman and managing director of Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd., and has taken various innovative steps to promote housing as a people's programme using low-cost technologies.

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facing similar economic and social problems. While the study evolves an excellent research framework that can be replicated to generate similar studies in other cities, the section dealing with housing demand parameters for Ahmedabad also compares the results with international evidence for developing countries, thereby extending the findings to a broader market context. The analysis of housing demand presents estimates of income and price elasticities for tenure and income classes. They also conduct a hedonic analysis to highlight the fact that the market valuation of housing is based on a variety of attributes related to location, dwelling characteristics, type of dwelling, amenities and legal status.

Affordability calculations for target populations are a critical element of project design. The results from the study amply demonstrate the inadequacy of any rule of thumb or a single ratio to predict consumption for different income and tenure groups in the city. Similarly most current public sector housing projects contain subsidies, explicit or implicit. How inefficient these subsidies are critically depends on the demand and price elasticities of the participants. The present study helps in evolving a range of estimates to examine the costs and benefits of alternative programmes qualitatively.

The behavioural study throws light on the preference structure of different household groups, their housing adjustment processes, the constraints faced by various household groups in attaining the preferred housing characteristics, their intra-urban mobility and incremental housing as modes of housing adjustment. Based on these findings, certain distinct patterns of household behaviour are brought out in the context of the local housing market. The four stylised typologies include 'early achievers' 'middle-age or late achievers', 'constrained adjusters' and 'downward mobile'. The distribution of households in these groups is critically linked both to the buoyancy of the economy and to the public policy.

> *. . . on the whole, the Urban Land Ceiling Act despite its progressive ambitions towards a more equitable society, has not benefited the real low-income groups in the city. In the short-run, however, it did lead to a largely unintended effect of a spurt in the housing activity in the city, further aided by the transfer of finances from the Textile industry and a buoyant private sector developer group in the city . . . . As compared to the other metropolitan cities, the building cost index of Ahmedabad shows the least increase. This may be partly reflected in the high rate of building activity in Ahmedabad especially during the seventies. . . .*
>
> *From* Metropolitan Housing Market: A Study of Ahmedabad

In the discussion on the direction that emerge from the study, the authors suggest various direct and indirect measures for state intervention on the issues of land and services, housing finance, the rental market, institutional mechanisms, all within the perspective of a housing support policy framework. In conclusion they reiterate that the housing question will continue to be under political pressures for a long time to come. And alternatively suggest the need for strengthening the organisational capacities of the poor as an essential element of the overall housing strategy towards the turn of the century. All things considered, this book is an extremely valuable and timely contribution to the literature on this subject and should pave way for more studies at the local level. ❑

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Robert Wade

Drawing on research in areas of Andhra Pradesh where rain is scarce and unreliable, Robert Wade argues that some villages develop and finance joint institutions for cooperative management of common property resources in grazing and irrigation—but others do not. The main reason lies in the risk of crop loss. Villages located towards the tail-end of irrigation systems and with soils fertile enough to support a high density of livestock show a larger amount of corporate organisation than villages elsewhere.

The author argues that peasants can organise collectively under certain conditions. Privatisation or state regulation are therefore not the only ways of preventing degrading of common property resources in peasant societies.

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ECLECTIC THEOLOGIANS

Pavan K. Varma

THE SHRINE AND CULT OF MU'IN AL-DIN CHISHTI OF AJMER
By P.M. Currie
Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 220, Rs.190.00

LETTERS FROM MANERI: SUFI SAINT OF MEDIEVAL INDIA
Translated by Paul Jackson.
Horizon Books India, 1990, pp. 478, (hardback) Rs. 395.00

Sufism (tasawwuf) emerged as a distinct movement within the movement of Islam around the eleventh century. Its essential profile was that of a protest movement against the tendency of ritualistic Islam to strangle a devotee's spiritual spontaneity. Its basic tenet was the right of each spiritual aspirant to have direct communication with the Almighty without intermediaries. Its mystical and ascetic profile was a challenge to organised religion on orthodox lines. In the early stages the Sufi tariquah was looked upon with hostility by Muslim theocracy. However, as the movement gained in strength, its existence came to be accepted. By the 13th Century there were several orders of mystical education within the Sufi framework. Each order (khanaqah) was headed by a Shaikh (perceptor or master) with his own murids (disciples), following a distinct path (tariqa), transmitted generationally (silsila).

❦

A pervasive weakness of modern life is what I call the acceptable threshold of shallowness of knowledge in everything that we consider substantive and important, be it literature or music, religion or spirituality. I have not been on a pilgrimage to Ajmer as yet, but if I go, as I would like to, the reading of Dr Currie's book would make it an infinitely more meaningful experience.

❦

In India the most influential Sufi order was that of 'Muin al-din Chishti of Ajmer. P.M. Currie's work is a historical study of the origins of the shrine and cult of Muin al-din Chishti, attempting to separate history from myth, fact from legend. Currie deals also with the factual aspects of the actual pilgrimage to Ajmer, the administration of the dargah and its endowments and finances. The book is a worthy compendium of facts and anecdotage. It is essential reading for *scholars* both of history and theology. The meticulous and copious research that has gone into its making is both its strength and its weakness: strength because the scholar would find all the information that he is seeking on this subject between its covers; weakness because the lay reader may find himself swamped by the preponderance of footnotes and academic minutiae.

As one goes through the book, there is the slightest feeling that, even the serious reader, in his quest to know more about the great saint, may miss the wood for the trees. This is of course not to belittle the many valuable academic insights provided by Dr Currie and the wealth of folklore, culled from a great diversity of textual material, which he has put together. The first chapter on 'The Role of Saints in Islam", wherein Dr Currie examines the plurality of Arabic, Persian and Urdu terms to describe a saint (wali, murshid, shaykh, darvish, sufi, pir) is an appropriate initial setting for the following chapters. As Dr Currie writes : 'Only against such a background does the emergence of this historically shadowy figure (Mu'in al-din Chishti) become intelligible."

A particularly interesting aspect of Dr Currie's work in his attempt to profile the political and social status of Mu'in al-din Chisthi's devotees, from the Emperors Akbar and Jehangir down to present day dignitaries and the importance of Shaikh Mu'in al-din in the social and cultural life of India and Pakistan.

A pervasive weakness of modern life is what I call the acceptable threshold of shallowness of knowledge in everything that we consider substantive and important, be it literature or music, religion or spirituality. I have not been on a pilgrimage to Ajmer as yet, but if I go, as I would like to, the reading of Dr Currie's book would make it an infinitely more meaningful experience. It would give me a sense of historical perspective to know, for instance, that Mohammad bin Tughlaq was the first recorded visitor to the shrine; a detailed map of the shrine complex with notes to explain the significance and history of each area, which is given in Chapter 4 of the book, would be of great help; so would a knowledge of the various symbolisms associated with the pilgrimage, such as the offering of the chadar, or the 'looting' of the 'degs'; to know in advance about the institution of the 'Sajjada-Nishin,' the spiritual leader of the shrine, and the 'Khuddam', the servants of the shrine, and about how the dargah is administered, would undoubtedly also be of great value. I remain conscious however of the fact that, armed with all this knowledge, I may still have a much poorer spiritual experience than an unread peasant. That indeed is the credo of Sufism.

Horizon Books have brought out an excellent edition of the letters of Sharafuddin Maneri, who was born in Bihar around 1290 and is regarded as one of India's most well-known Sufi saints. Maneri's sway is particularly strong in Bihar where his followers came to eclipse the more well entrenched Chishti, Qadari and Naqshbandi Sufi orders. The 100 letters were originally written in Persian between the period 1346 to 1347, to a prominent disciple, Qazi Shamsuddin. It is ironical that it is a foreigner, Paul Jackson, who has finally brought this treasure-house of Sufi wisdom to an English readership. Paul Jackson, who is Australian, came to India in 1960 and is a recognised authority on Islam and Sufism. Maneri's letters cover the entire gamut of Sufi theology—if such a word as theology can be used in the context of Sufism. They discuss in terms of lyrical simplicity, the concept of the unity of God, the nature of saintliness, the origins of human error, the concepts of truth and purity, the virtues which constitute good behaviour and the bondage of wordly possessions. What emerges with abundant clarity is the role of the spiritual guide in the Sufi tariqah: both father and friend, critic and supporter, admonishing at one step, encouraging at another. It is a relationship which has a mesmerising quality, a bond of faith that must have provided great solace.

Pavan K. Varma, a member of the Indian Foreign Service, is the author of Ghalib, The Man, The Times.

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The earliest compilation of these letters was apparently made almost immediately after the death of Maneri, because there is evidence that Mohammed bin Tughlaq read them. The present translation has been made from a manuscript of the 16th century, which is still preserved in the Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna. Abul Fazl, author of the Ain-i-Akbari, has recorded that he read portions of *The Hundred Letters* to Emperor Akbar, while Hamiduddin, secretary to Aurangazeb, relates that Aurangazeb always kept a copy of the work with him.

There is one slight note of concern that imperceptibly grows somewhere along the line in the mind of the reader of both these volumes. This concern rests on the fact that while Sufism originated essentially as a movement away from the thralldom of organised religion, stressing on direct, ecstatic communication with God, at some stage along its evolution, the creation of spiritual guides and distinct orders, led to restrictions on the free thinking and freedom of judgement which had been the movement's greatest strength. The more Sufism became organised, the more it became a religious order with its own constricting rules and regulations. The more it began to evolve a sub-theology of its own, the more it began to approximate the rigid features against which it had originally rebelled. Some of the letters of Maneri bring out this aspect. But, fortunately, such letters are in a minority and by and large the compilation elaborates an ecletic strain which alone accounts for the fact that Maneri has followers both among Hindus and Muslims.

That indeed is the transcendent strength of the spiritual legacy of Muin al-din Chishti as well. It is significant though, that in delineating the history and legend of the Pir of Ajmer, P.M. Currie has brought forward material to show that in the initial stages, traditional Muslims looked upon Chishti as Islam's sword to convert infidels to the faith. Their interpretation was subject to their historical situation and is of course not a commentary on the larger faith and credo with which this great saint has ultimately come to be associated. ❑

There is one slight note of concern that imperceptibly grows somewhere along the line in the mind of the reader of both these volumes. This concern rests on the fact that while Sufism originated essentially as a movement away from the thralldom of organised religion, stressing on direct, ecstatic communication with God, at some stage along its evolution, the creation of spiritual guides and distinct orders, led to restrictions on the free thinking and freedom of judgement which had been the movement's greatest strength. The more Sufism became organised, the more it became a religious order with its own constricting rules and regulations. The more it began to evolve a sub-theology of its own, the more it began to approximate the rigid features against which it had originally rebelled. Some of the letters of Maneri bring out this aspect. But, fortunately, such letters are in a minority and by and large the compilation elaborates an ecletic strain which alone accounts for the fact that Maneri has followers both among Hindus and Muslims.

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BOOKS AND THE PRESS

A Seminar Report

We bring to our readers in the following pages some excepts of a seminar on Books And The Press held in Madras last year. The need for a journal devoted solely to book-reviewing was emphasized by publishers, editors of newspapers, distributors, booksellers and critics alike. The fact that such a journal, The Book Review, has existed for fourteen years was not adequately highlighted in this seminar, which must be attributed to a proper distribution network not being available to us. We are happy to inform our readers that the situation has improved since the setting up of The Book Review literary Trust, and the journal in its new format is being widely distributed.

Of some of the other ideas expressed at the seminar, it must be pointed out that The Book Review has already taken the initiative independently to implement them. The idea of book-review programmes on television was taken up on an experimental basis in November-December 1988 by The Book Review when panelists (among whom were Dr. Meenakshi Mukherjee, Khushwant Singh, Gopal Gandhi, K. Subrahmanyam, Dileep Padgaonkar, A.K. Damodaran, Dr. Dharma Kumar, Dr. Kaushik Basu and T.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan) reviewed books by Indian writers in English, Gorbachev's Perestroika, *and some important books in economics on television. The mandarins of Mandi House however did not feel that book-reviewing had a place on television, and the experiment was given up.*

The Book Review highlights regional languages publications regularly in its columns. That we are making an impact in this field is borne out by letters we receive from publishers who have taken up translations of works reviewed by us from the regional language into English.

Ms. Susan Ram's idea of a workshop to educate critics in the art of reviewing struck a chord in the long-suffering hearts of the editors of The Book Review. A seminar is being planned by us to be scheduled at the end of the year or thereabouts along the lines suggested by Ms. Ram and others.

Editor

We, publishers and publishers' agents representing major English publishers the world over as wholesalers and stockists and as booksellers experience difficulties in making the reading public aware of the new books that are being put out day after day. New titles will be taken note of by prospective readers only if they are reviewed by responsible newspapers and journals. Not only reviewed, but reviewed promptly and properly. I am not saying that reviews should be only favourable. Fulsome praise can do as much harm to a book as not being reviewed or totally ignored. What I mean is a critical appraisal, weighing the good and bad points in a book so that the reader of the review will be able to form a proper assessment of the title and enable him or her to decide whether to purchase the book or not. Unless such reviews come out when the books are on the stands, there is every likelihood of the volumes languishing on the shelves of bookshops and just collecting dust. All reviews need not be reviews in depth—that really depends on the content and subject matter and is best left to discriminating reviewers and the editors of the papers and journals concerned. Nor should they be reproductions of the blurbs, very often a sign that the reviewer has not gone beyond the dust jacket. They can even be brief notices just to make readers aware that the book has been published—notices that would be enough to whet the appetites of readers who will go on from there to decide whether they want the books or not.

Reviewing and publishing go hand in hand in the developed countries and rightly so. It is as if new intellectual and creative efforts of authors are being led by the hand by the Press and introduced to the reading public. After that it is upto the readers to decide whether the newcomer should be cultivated or left alone. Even if what is said in a new book may not be acceptable to a reader, he may still read it because it gives a point of view which deserves to be taken note of, if at least to differ from. Although Indian newspapers and journals realise the importance of carrying reviews in their pages, we feel adequate thought is not being given to this essential service which should be offered by the media, especially the Press. Most Indian newspapers, particularly the English press, do have a book page or two once a week but we feel that sufficient thought is not bestowed on them. We hope that our discussion here will enable representatives of the press to realise the importance of the service they will be doing to the reading public by presenting review columns with the responsibility and care they deserve.

In fact we would go one step further and request our newspapers to bring out weekly, or at least fortnightly, literary supplements which would carry articles by leading writers and critics along with reviews. Distinguished prototypes like the *London Times Literary Supplement* (TLS as it is popularly called) and the *Observer Supplement* come to one's mind. If full fledged supplements pose any problems, a tabloid format could be thought of. Another point we would like to emphasise here is that these supplements should offer advertisement space at concessional tariff for advertising books, old and new, as in the weekly Shopping Window supplements offered by many newspapers now.

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On their part, Indian publishing houses should put their house in order and see that publishing schedules are adhered to and advance copies sent to the press so that the books would be on the stands when the reviews come out. The reader of a review should be in a position to purchase the book reviewed straightaway if he is so minded. It would be of advantage if publishers are informed when a review is slated for publication so that they could advertise the book in the same issue to derive the maximum advantage.

There is or should be a special affinity and understanding between the periodical press and the book industry, because both are in the world of communications. The journalist is a professional communicator, who writes to be read, to influence and in some way affect the course of events. Hence members of the Press can understand that writing which is not read is not communication. Publishers and booksellers are similarly in the field of communication. Though they do not produce the words, i.e. do not write the contents of the books, they shape and influence the production of the books, through editing, designing and printing, at every stage with an eye to the dissemination of the book among the widest readership attainable. The justification for having a publisher to produce the writing of an author, and for having a network of booksellers to sell the books, is that these are professionals, who can ensure a wide sale and wide readership for the product of the author's mind. Every media of communication has its professionals who serve to ensure that the work does get communicated. We in the book trade fill that role for the printed word in book form.

A book that is not sold or not read is in effect a non-book. It is a failure in communication.

Traditionally books are sold through bookshops and to some extent by direct mail. Except for certain types of reference books, door to door selling of books is rare. For books to be purchased from bookshops, it is necessary not only that the books are physically disseminated and displayed, it is also necessary that the reading public should know or hear about the books and have an interest in seeing, buying and reading them. Without news about books being circulated, prospective buyers will not seek out such books. It is in this vital function of disseminating book information that the book industry looks to the periodical Press, and also to other media, for help. While it is true that the book industry has a financial stake and a monetary motivation in seeking sales, it must be remembered that we are motivated by an enlightened self-interest, because only a book that sells will produce royalties for its author, and only a book that is read will transmit the ideas or message of its author, however eminent he may be.

A book that is not sold or not read is in effect a non-book. It is a failure in communication. This realisation is what has brought the book trade and the periodical Press together, because we believe in the value of the written word, just as you of the Press do, and we think you will play your part in ensuring that the author's creative work is communicated to its appropriate audience.

■ VICTOR ABDULLAH

President of the Booksellers & Publishers Association of South India.

❦

Books and writers of books and publishers of books on the one hand, and editors, book reviewers, and readers of newspapers and journals on the other, have obviously marched to greet each other. It is generally thought that the writers of books and the readers of newspaper articles and reviews have different standards and different obligations. The journalist of course has to write for the immediate moment and he has a dateline to meet and he has to deal with problems of urgency. An author on the other hand can take his own time to try and establish a long term view, and he can spread himself out. And the worst criticism of an author, he or she fears to have, is to say that what has been written is journalese. Now I would suggest that perhaps this is going a bit too far and much benefit could result on both sides, if there was a little more cooperation. Of course the author likes to get reviews, he likes to get good reviews naturally, but even a bad review is better than no review, for at least people should be made aware of the existence of the book and even if the review is poor, many people react by saying 'I would like to judge for myself'. I would like to suggest that more time and attention should be given by members of the Press to the reviewing of books. I do not think they should limit themselves to such books as happen to be sent to them for review. It is worthwhile and certainly the practice elsewhere that the Editors of those managing the book review hear of a particular book, even if it has not been sent to them, should follow it up, and try and see if they can get a review done by a knowledgeable person.

In India at the moment, however poor the quality of the printing or the binding and the editing of book, more books are being published in India every year, than ever before and looking at the world, India comes only third, after Britain and the United States in the number of Indian publications issued every year. Also the number of newspapers and magazines and journals are multiplying so that we have the base on both sides. We have the number of books increasing and the number of jounrals also increasing. What is lacking is communication, not only are these two agencies communicators, but there is a paucity of communication between them. If a greater relationship could be established between book publishers and booksellers on the one hand, and newspapers and journalists on the other, certainly I think it would be of consequence to not only authors and pressmen but also to the reading public.

What I finally say is that while Pressmen write from vocation and write in a hurry, yet it has been felt that perhaps journalists and editors would also benefit by a little more reading, a greater breadth of vision and greater sense of the deeper issues involved.

■ DR. S. GOPAL

Noted historian and biographer.

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There are in other parts of the country and in other metropolitan centres where newpapers weild some influence people who feel the same kind of dissatisfaction some of us share here about what goes on in the interaction of books and the Press. Mr Abdulla told me there was at attempt, a somewhat unsuccessful attempt to involve what we would consider the non-independent media, the state manipulated, the state controlled media. But it is important to tap these sources in the media, particularly television and video and because of those subjects on which most books are published today there should be no objection to doing some kind of justice to this activity, the life of mind, the writing of books and so on, because too little is seen in the non-independent media, even compared with the little that we do in the press, but I think that is the deficiency that must be made up, although the rules of the game are totally different, so different that we can hardly talk about the media in India as a category, as you can of western Europe or America—they do some of the same kinds of things and some of the same rules of the game apply, whereas here it is different, like, as soon as you take up a book like Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* or the unfortunate practice of mutilating or censoring protions or lines of encyclopedias and the moment you break into TV time, not even prime time, you will have some objection. However the Press does perform some role in bringing to the attention of the public and there we would claim quality superiority so far as the role and credibility of our function is concerned. But that is something that should be tapped. The reach

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a unique niche for ourselves
in the field of housing finance
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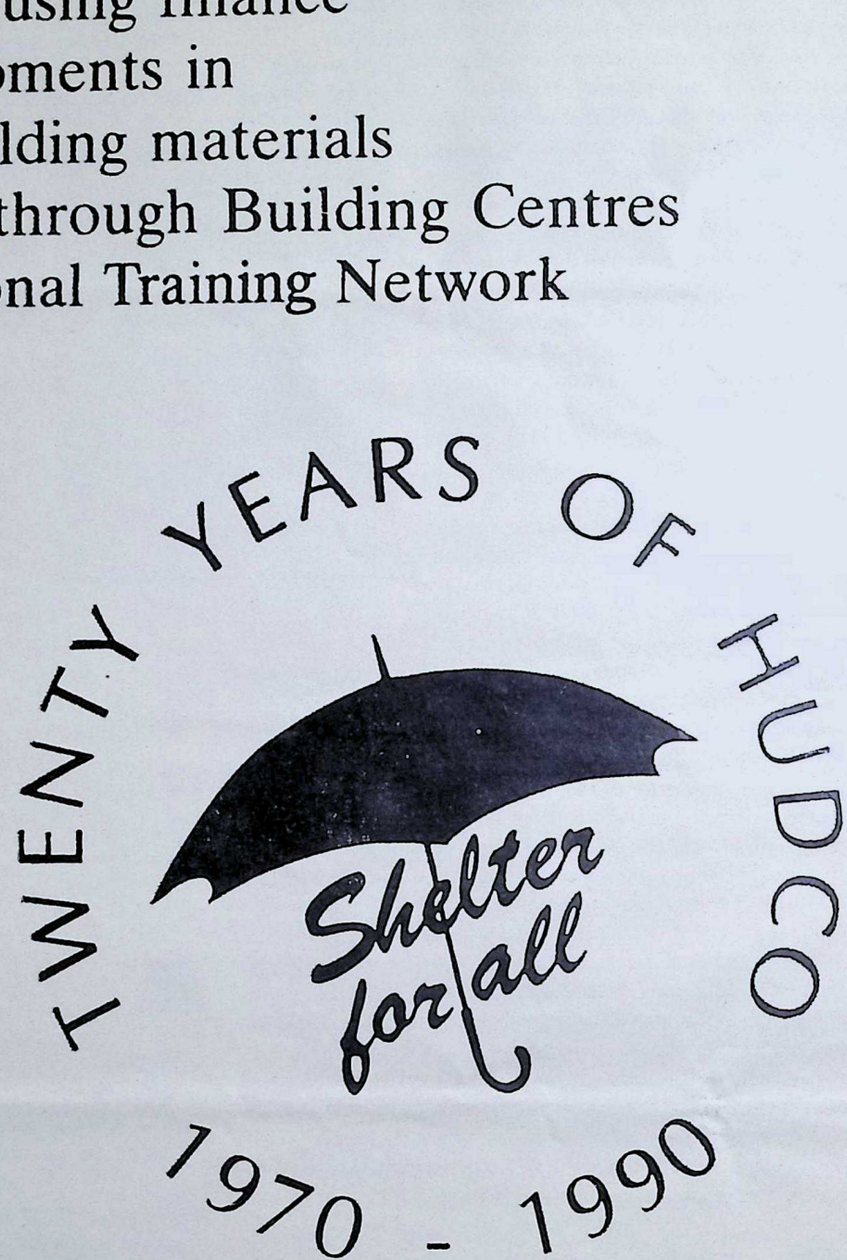

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of television in particular or the radio is enormous in our country and to the extent books are mentioned in some of the broadcast, to the extent they highlight the themes, the qualities, I think we can benefit a great deal.

Publishers and publishers agents representing major publishers around the world, do experience difficulties in the Indian context in making the book-reading public aware of new books being brought out, some of them are worthwhile, new titles have come to the attention of the public only because they are noticed and reviewed by influential newspapers and journals. The problems with reviews is that although they serve some useful function, even as they are presently developed, there is a great deal of superficiality. This is obvious even to those of us in the Press who recognise intensive superficial traits in journalism who have a tendency to dilly-dallism, lack of specialisation, if you wanted to be sympathetic, the problem of having to write in a hurry to meet the deadline and so on, these impose tremendous constraints as anyone knows, who is familiar with journalism with jounalistic minds and habits, and I think even allowing for it, we feel that there is something wrong with the way Book Page reviewing, planning and editing is conducted in our country. There are papers who may consider devoting more pages not necessarily to book reviews but to book articles even highlighting particular themes and authors and so on. The trouble is that as far as I can make out in most newspapers including our own, the one I work with, the Book Page and book reviews do not get enough attention.

> For books to be purchased from book-shops, it is necessary not only that the books are physically disseminated and displayed, it is also necessary that the reading public should know or hear about the books and have an interest in seeing, buying and reading them. Without news about books being circulated, prospective buyers will not seek out such books. It is in this vital function of disseminating book information that the book industry looks to the periodical Press, and also to other media, for help.

Fortunately there is a tradition of noticing and reviewing books which is fairly rooted in India, for historical reasons, it has a fairly long standing practice. If you look at the old reviews and book review pages you do get the feeling that although the times were different, although they were writing to different audiences, the rules of the game were quite different in those times, habits of mind, the attitude to literature, it was more restricted and rarified—although that is so, there is a clear tendency to be careless with this part of journalism in India, so that you do have the problem of even living up to the older standards. If you look at the Literary Page, the Book Page, etc. the current tendency is to adopt a routine, an unexcited state and style of the book page. I think there are honourable interesting exceptions including some young people who do get excited to this activity. The number of papers and the sections of pages that go beyond the conventional, short, matter of fact, business-like approaches to reviews, I think these are very limited, occasionaly magazines do a modicum of justice to the field of publishing, but they do not do this as a regular activity in any systematic conscious sense, I think, in the Indian context. I think this contrasts rather unfavourably with the potential there is, the advantage there is in the composition of redership in the Indian newspapers. Changes are taking place in the profile of newspaper readership in India, but the advantage of dealing with the fairly serious, attentive, alive core of serious readers, who are fairly serious about intellectual matters—I think this is an advantage which some of the other journalistic professionals around us do not possess. Journalism professors and thoughtful media persons from other countries, who come into some contact with the Indian press, at least in my knowledge, do note the serious concerns, the fairly sustained preoccupation with serious issues including intellectual subjects that our Press has and this must be seen in interaction with readership, if the readership can bear this.

Secondly, although I do not know how many publishers realise that although in general assessments and so on the Indian press is supposed to wield only a limited influence, I do not think that is so either historically or in contemporary situation. While newspapers have a limited reach and influence in relation to a population of 800 million in 1988 in absolute terms they do make a considerable difference. In terms of the absolute numbers and in terms of the base these provide for the development of an Indian professional activity. I think this is quite considerable and upto date and some of you may be surprised by the fact that the latest figures indicate that the total circulation of all newspapers (this I think is somewhat inflated) would be of the order of 68-69 million, you have the surprising figure brought out by the Registrar of Newspapers in India, that there are about 20,000 registered newspapers in the country. It's a ridiculous figure, but I think it is about 2000 registered newspapers, about 1/10 of that number.

I would like to draw your attention to these figures because they would go against the superficial impression that the Press counts for very little in terms of reach and input in comparison with the nonindependent media in our country. Therefore it is quite worthwhile to interact with the Press to improve its performance on books on publishing and on the kinds of issues we are concerned with here, in this seminar.

Added to this, the fact that many readers take the serious components of newspapers and the life of the mind fairly seriously, looking for things in the newspapers such as news and assessments of books, intellectual and academic, and noteworthy events in the field of literature and music, etc.. The controversies surrounding Salman Rushdie's recent book, and the lawless censoring and the mutilation of passages and lines of books imported—in our country these do raise profound profile of publishing and the profile of writing in a rather useful way I think in the contemporary Indian context. I believe that such controversies as they are featured in the more serious sections of the Press have a worldwhile and healthy impact on the readership attitudes. It raises the profile of intellectual questions and issues such as role of the writer limits and legitimacy of allowing freeplay of literary imagination, the issue of free intellect[illegible]pression, social problems, intra religious, lingustic, ethnic [illegible] sensitivities, fundamentalism and chauvinism, being a t[illegible]me writers freedom of expression.

Coming to the subject on hand, the more serious concern here, to make a concrete start we must recognise I think when we are talking about newspapers and books that you have the useful thing called an established or institutional sense, and the routine way books and reviewing are dealt with in the editorial offices and the production departments of newspapers in a sense testify to this. Having said this one would immediately place on record a sense of dissatisfaction of the performance of newspapers from a qualitative strong point in relation to books. One has merely to skip through the pages of serious books and publications like the *New York Review Of Books* or sections or even supplements of the better newspapers abroad for the pages given to books and quality magazines to realise with embarrassment how much better we can do for books, literature and the life of the mind in our country. I speak with a real knowledge of space constraints, problems of slotting these items in our rather rigid framework and so on and even allowing all this, this comment was on hold, and the quality of the reviews is highly variable. The

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Book Page or Review Editor is usually I think in my experience quite an experienced and competent person. People who are in love with books and take reviewing very earnestly and who is himself or herself a consumer of books, come to the person for reviews. The problem is that in many newspapers including in *The Hindu* looking after the Book Page is only one of the tasks assigned to an experienced correspondent. This I think is a genuine problem and not judged to be, I think in most cases, a real full time activity, an activity in which you become totally committed in terms of time, in terms of your energies, in terms of our intellect and sources and professional skills.

As tendencies of specialisation are beginning to develop in Indian journalism, reporting, reviewing and writing of books, looking after the book page, literary journalism must be recognised as a distinctive field of specialisation.

My own view is that it is pretty obvious that looking after planning and editing a substantial book and literary page must become a full time professional activity, the assignment being not merely a recognition of seniority of attitude but a recognition that specialisation would be in order. As tendencies of specialisation are beginning to develop, in Indian journalism, reporting, reviewing and writing of books, looking after the book page on literary journalism must be recognised as a distinctive field of specialisation. It is at the moment looked on as a rather soft side of journalism unfortunately. I think only this will be a progressive response to the problem, attitudes—interests, knowledge, enthusiasm, must be developed to the challenge of doing the minimum amount of justice to worthwhile books.

The other well known problem is that the economics are rather underdeveloped, the remuneration for reviewers is extremely poor, compared to what photographers get when applied to a newspaper. One slide is worth several reviews, several papers, there is a real problem in the development—unbalanced development, we are acutely aware of this, particularly those who look after the Book Page. I tried my best to find out how it works abroad, asking and tickling the brains of journalists and reviewers, and authors in fact, and one answer they give is, you let them have the book, of course the book must be worthwhile, that's the first condition, and preferrably an expensive book you got free and particularly if it's a duplicate, then I think you would make it a rule that the reviewer keeps the book and you can go to reviewers and provide some incentive.

■ N. RAM
Associate Editor, The Hindu

I belong to the group of people who have substantive interest in book reviews and the role of presentation of information on books. I think all the previous speakers who mentioned the press, the authors, the publishers, did not mention in their summaries the word Librarian, we always get forgotten. Well, I gather from some friends that India imported something like 26 crores worth of foreign books last year. This means that vast amounts, which India also produces, not so bad, something like 50-60,000 books a year. Faced with this ocean of material, how do librarians set about the tast of selecting books, not just for himself or herself, but for a vast public, the public will come back again and again to read the books they have selected. So this is really tightrope walking and in this I think book reviews do sometimes come to their help. I think most reviewers are of two types, either they are gutters, this is some base type which is put together, or people who just do a skillful skim of the blurb and without any regard for pages, just reproduce something. This is the kind of review that comes in papers. But inspite of all that, we have to think of reviews, because this is the only sort of indication of what the contents of the books are. Quite often reviews not only clear up what books we should acquire, but more often they show us what books we can avoid, or tell us all about the books which we shall certainly not have the time to read at all. So what makes a good review? I think a good review should give in as compact form as posible the distilled essence of the book. But what quite often happens is that the reviewer just uses the title as a peg on which to nail. As you know there are as a rule, different types of reviews, there are what I can call the mini review which appear in reviews like in *The Book seller* or in specific columns of newspapers. Then there are various kinds of fuller reviews which are longer, almost articles, scholarly in approach, which tell us a lot more about the book. Then there are universal reviews when people club together with their recent choices, say four or five books and speak about it, and then there is lastly the very excellent survey reviews, where we can survey a whole class of books. These give you a bird's-eye view, but then they are not restricted to just new books. They cover books which are produced over a period of years but they have their use for librarians because we do a retropsective stock editing to make sure that the content of the libraries has not been deficient in one respect or the other. These kinds of articles are of great use. Now when we look at reviewers in our own country, one of the reasons why book reviews have not been the relied pictographical tool or dependable, is that good reviewers are very scarce in attitude, just like the attitudes in books and libraries, it is the same with book reviews. It is thought by very many people that if anybody can handle a friend they can write a review. But is it so? Because if a person has to write a book review, he should be able to place the book in its context, of the books which have preceded the class of books, what sort of books are already available and then say whether it covers the ground, are there any obvious errors, what are its good points and bad points—all these need to be highlighted and these are I am afraid for some reason or the other our reviewers in India, are either cowards or they want to find favour with the publishers who have sent them the copies or the Press gives them the hundred rupees or whatever it is, they are not able to come out with incisive remarks about the sort of context the book has. This is why most of the reviews are hardly worth reading.

The reviewer should realise that he is not just operating on his own. He is one of a quartet of people—there is the author, the publisher, the editor, and then the reviewer. So he should take note of these things when he writes his review. However small and precise it is, the review has to be readable. A person who sets himself up to be a reviewer, essentially be one who is capable of expressing himself in a very readable vein. It is no use in indulging in a lot of jargon or being too scholarly for the normal run of people. Above all a review should appear as soon as possible of the publiction of the book. This is where I am afraid we are very badly off, because those newspapers which are the largest receivers of books from publishers, they don't receive the books on time, they haven't got the reviewers on tap, to whom they can send, and even if they do there are some people who sleep over them, so it comes very very late so it might as well not appear at all, for all the effect it could have. Sometime ago, almost seven years ago in Britain, one of the book firms, they carried out a survey of about a dozen of the daily and weekly newspapers like *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, *The Sunday Observer*, etc. they found that within a period of three months, about 4000 reviews had appeared and what they did was to survey the types of books which had appeared, and they listed them and in the magic order as one would expect, it has been found that fiction, biography, headed the list, followed closely by children's books, art books, then history, natural sciences, and so on. Surprisingly politics was way down the list. They were able to see which were the sort of subjects they were able to get people to review or books that are available to them and what they did further was to keep statistics about the number of book reviews, about individual titles and here the local librarians took their own statistics to see whether the number of reviews about a book had any effect at all on the borrowing, the booksellers for their part came up with the result on their

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bookselling, on the book reservations and the book requests, because for a librarian apart from the reviews appearing in the papers, what appears in the journals, what appears in the scholarly journals, what the users of the library most of whom are specialists in their own fields, what they ask for are very good guides. The newspaper offices and book publishers should get together and do this kind of survey to see what are the types of book which are being reviewed and get from librarians a feed-back. Now that most newspaper offices I think are computerising all their hosuekeeping operations, it should not all that difficult to put together lists of all the books reviewed and have classified lists of these ready on tap. One of the most difficult things for anybody wishing to review a book is to find or to buy a book or to decide if they should but it is for a library to trace a review. In western countries I think even the *American Book Review Index* and *The Book Review Digest* list all the reviews of books. But I don't believe we have a similar thing at all in India, and it will be a good thing if large papers like *The Hindu* could take on this task of preparing reviews of book reviews.

■ SUSHILA KUMAR
President, *Madras Library Association*

❦

This year happens to be the 300th anniversary of the first published Book Review. It was published in 1689 in a paper called London Mercury. Those days of course people who could pay for reviews got very good reviews. Since then of course things have changed. I have 3, 4 points to make. One is about the timeliness of book reviews. The main point I think is we don't get sufficient advance information of a book. In the US and UK bound gallies are distributed to major reviewers, and the publication date is set and the most important reviews would come out on or around the publicate dates, based on bound gallies, may be for important books Indian companies could also think about this option.

Coming to the question of reviews themselves, I find that in many small publications, have problems in access to good books, especially the important ones. The problem obviously is that these books are expensive and the publishers cannot distribute them as widely as they would like to, and here again if bound gallies can be obtained from the original publisher, it might be of some help.

■ C. S. G. PRASAD
Aside *Magazine*

❦

In advertising, publishers in India face a problem. The cost of the book maybe 35-40 rupees. We print about 4000-5000 copies. When we advertise, we hope that by advertising we may be able to sell about 2000 copies. But for the kind of ad. charges we pay, the results have not been positive. For instance, for the Madras Book Fair we gave two advertisements, one was about the dicitonary that is meant for children, *The Mini School Dictionary*. I think with that ad. which cost me Rs. 2500 I could hardly sell 50 copies, whereas by direct mailing and by going to schools we were able to sell 6000 copies.

■ VEMBU IYER
Publisher

❦

Krishnamurthy of *Dinamalar*, whom we approached, asked me to make a point on his behalf. His paper does review quite a few Tamil books, every week. It is his point of view that readers have come and complained to him that seeing the reviews of Tamil books in his newspaper, they are unable to find any of those Tamil books in any bookshops. His particular point is except for Higginbothams no other bookshop has devoted any space for Tamil books' display and sale. He says there is a need for bookshops selling Tamil books. It should be well located and well displayed, but all the bookshops should carry books in Tamil and other regional languages. Coming to my own point of view in terms of advertisements, I think our members would be interested to hear that last year the FPBA took up the matter with the Press all over India and they persuaded them and gave them the idea of giving some concessional tariff for advertising books, and the *Times of India* group of publications, have indeed come out with a 25% concession for books, ads. on books. Also they place these ads. in the Book Review pages without any extra charge. I think other members of the Press should look at it and see if it is feasible. Now our experience is even if I release an advertisement on a day when I know this particular paper carries a review page, unless I pay 50% extra it doesn't come into that page at all.

Another problem we have always faced is in the shopping pages. For eg., some papers have some policy like we will—if there is a bookshop and I want to advertise for a bookshop, there are papers which refuse to take it, they say we will accept only consumer durables there. Finally, a very practical point, we tell the publishers and distributors that the reviews will appear on such and such a day that books will be made available in bookshops. Now I as a bookseller have this experience. Suddenly books get reviewed, and some people ring up and say this morning such and such a book got reviewed I would like to have a copy. We don't even know if the review is appearing. If the distributor or the publisher is taken into confidence and informed in advance of the appearance of the review, copies can be made available in the bookshops, people can have access to it.

■ SRINIVASAMURTHY
Book-seller.

❦

There has been a lot of talk on book reviews, there are various newspapers and books in Tamil coming out. They do not know about reviews. There are several newspapers like *The Express*, *The Hindu*, *Dinamalar* which review books. *The Hindu* gives two pages to English books but they allot only 2 columns to South Indian books, that too for four languages. Someone talked about the sales of Tamil books in Madras. Higginbothams are selling Tamil books and keeping them, but I don't know why the others don't keep Tamil books. Some come and buy from us and keep them in their shops, but they don't come regularly. If they would keep books they will sell.

■ CHELLAPPA
Book-seller

❦

In November during the NBT Book Fair, we undertook a survey of bookshops and we had a seminar on promoting book-mindedness in various cities. Promoting Bookmindedness. That was the topic of the seminar. There was a seminar in Lucknow, which I attended. There we gathered a lot of information on metropolitan cities. Now we have seen how in the last five years real estate prices have gone up, by 500%. So the rents rates have gone up too. Space has become expensive and that's one main reason for this. The second reason is that Tamil publishers are scattered all over south India, say Madurai, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli, they don't have a wholesaling system as such, in the major metropolitan cities. They should have a wholesaleing system which will enable them to have a service centre of availability of all publishers' books. Suppose I want to buy a book on Saiva Siddhanta I have to go to the publishers and they don't even have a main centre. Some years back P.T. Bell or Tirumalai or somebody used to do it. But now it has become uneconomical for them. So the Tamil publishers could come forward and make some kind of arrangement where they can trust one individual company to do the wholesaling. That's one solution for this—books not being available in bookshops.

■ R. SHESHADRI
Area Manager, Routledge, Chapman & Hall

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We have heard from various contributors in this seminar about the cost of advertising. The publishers or wholesaler/distributors in India don't have anything against advertising. The cost-benefit ratio has to be worked out. In the case of mass market paperbacks it is really not worth advertising, but when it comes to any specialised books we feel it is easier for us to sell more number of copies by reviews appearing in newspapers, or by direct mail poromotion, so that it goes to the right target audience. That is the reason why there is some hesitation in ads. The other problem is, we find whenever we give any ads. in the newspapers, as somebody commented it is the location of the ad. Oftentimes the ad. is lost among all the tender notices which appear in the newspapers. If only it is ensured that the ads. do appear on the Book Review pages where people who are interested in books do look at it, that will go a long way. But if we want to do it now, what happens is, our ad. agents say we have to pay 25% more. If at least there is the first step that the 25% surcharge on the location of an ad. is eliminated, I think that will be an incentive for many of us to give ads.

Now about delayed book reviews, not only the sale of the book suffers, but the image of the bookshop also suffers. When the review gets delayed and after a year or two the review appears, the person who reads the review walks into a bookshop which he considers a good bookshop and the book reviewed is not available, his immediate comment is that it is a useless bookshop. Similarly the bookseller in turn approaches the distributors or that particular publisher, and if the distributor says the book is no longer available, then we get a bad name in the process. So as Mr Ram commented if only the review could be published within 3 months, or if not the book review can be avoided it would be a good thing for the trade. Just like justice delayed is justice denied, a book review delayed is a book review denied.

Coming to review copies, Mr Ram commented about giving away review copies to the reviewers, here again I think no publisher or book distributor will hesitate in giving two copies to the newspaper if it is asked for so that it would be reviewed. Perhaps giving five copies would be better than to advertise in the newspapers.

■ K.S. PADMANABHAN
Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd.

About some of you who have done some reviewing this is just a practical suggestion about how we might try to upgrade the book reviews that appear and also begin to regard reviewing as something of a specialisation. We were talking about looking at developments within journalism, about specialists in book page, book journalism and so on, obviously we have to upgrade the quality of materials that is going into such a page. I remember when I started reviewing here, being given instructions to centre around the book, and finish reviewing within 900 words of which approximately 700 words should be the summary of the text and on those lines. I think this is one of the problems reviewers face, that they are working in isolation with very few guidelines, and sometimes with overlarge egos and so on, that go with this type of work. Isn't there some way in which the press and the publishing industry could colloborate, to help reviewers and also to identify potential new reviewers, thinking perhaps along the lines of book review workshops which could be recognised easily whereby you might enlist the services of reliable and competent reviewers, and try and attract some new people maybe from colleges, and younger people who are working in the smaller magazines, and so on. We could have a half day session in which we could get together and talk and maybe some good reviews which appeared in reputed journals could be examined and see what the has reviewer done, how he has been able to cover the ground within a limited space and given a really good feel of the material. For eg. I remember a review about a year ago, the Literary Editor of the *Financial Times* was here on a British Council tour and he gave an extremely useful talk for about half an hour, about what makes for a good review. This was very useful to me in my own work, but I am sure we could start at an early stage and generate this type of discussion and this would be certainly a first step about what could appear professionally on the Book Page of a newspaper or magazines. Thank you.

■ SUSAN RAM
Oxford University Press, Madras

I think I shall sum this up. We have been talking about the quality of book reviews that have appeared in the past. To this I think there is one very solid suggestion which has been made and that is to organise a review workshop, a Reviewers Workshop.

Having worked on 3 sides of the fence, having been with the Press at one time, now in publishing and in printing, and I must say wherever I have there has been a sad lack in reviewing. A lot of reviewers have the tendency either to take the blurb or rewrite it and publish it. I think this is happening far too much and I think we should do something about it. At least on the Editorial level, reviews which come out like this should really be thrown out. This is one suggestion I have to make.

The other thing we have been talking about is the space given to reviews and here I can understand the newspapers point of view, the pressures it has for space, the very little advertising it receives from publishers, but equally I think it needs a better understanding of the publishing industry. I know people have been talking about 3 times, 5 times mark-ups in prices, if you analyse the mark-ups in prices in terms of books not sold, then you will really find out that compared to the consumer product industry which spends less than 5% on a product for advertising, the publishers have to spend, if we have to spend on advertising on books, about 15-20%. And that I think is an unbearable cost for the publishing industry.

This is an area which has to be looked at, and here again I would like to think of a workshop merely to educate a large section of the public who feel that book prices are far too high. If you look at a book and find the cost is Rs. 150, maybe out of 2000 copies only 150-200 sell. So this is one area which has to be looked at.

I am glad there has been an opportunity to discuss advertising costs, and I think the Publishers Association and the newspaper association could get together and discuss something. I disagree with Srinivasmurthy's suggestion that 25% will be adequate. But this is the area we should look into.

■ S. MUTHIAH
T. T. Maps & Publications Ltd.

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The Prince of Denmark Didn't Make Much

H. Y. Sharada Prasad

A great book means more to the reader than to the author. This truth struck me when I recently read that *Hamlet* fetched only five pounds to Shakespeare and *Paradise Lost* the same sum to Milton. At the other end, the publisher advanced 1.3 million dollars to E.L.Doctorow for *Ragtime*. Colleen McCollough got 1.9 million dollars for *The Thorn Birds*. Evidently the material returns have little relation to the inner worth. I found these and other facts and figures in a book with the rather unattractive title: *The Book of Literary Lists* (Nicholas Parsons, Fontana) It is a book which would enable one to answer many of the questions that are often to be asked by bright quiz masters. For example:

Which book has had the highest sale?

Answer: Outside the Bible (and the two modern-day Bibles, Lenin and Mao), Benjamin Spock's *Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care*, 23,285,000 copies since 1946.

And the second, third and fourth best selling books?

Answer: *Better Homes and Gardens Cook Book*, 18,685,926 copies; *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*: 18,500,000 copies; and *The Guinness Book of World Records*: 16,457,000 copies.

These according to *Eighty Years of Best Sellers* covering 1895 to 1975. But *Bestsellers* (Routledge 1971) tells us that Harold Robbins has sold 200 million copies in all and Alistair Maclean and Mickey Spillane 150 million each.

Who is the world's most prolific writer?

Answer: Lope de Vega, the sixteenth century Spaniard, who reportedly wrote 2200 works, and Dumas Sr. whose complete works run to 1500 volumes.

Which is the largest selling novel?

Answer: Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* (12,140,000 copies) followed by Willian Blatty's *The Exorcist* (11,702,097 copies).

Who are the most translated authors?

Answer: The first ten according to the *Unesco Statistical Yearbook*, in 1980:

V.I.Lenin 468
Walt Disney (Productions) 285
Agatha Christie 185
Jules Verne 172
Enid Blyton 147
Karl Marx 136
Barbara Cartland 135
Friedrich Engels 132
William Shakespeare 112.

That really tells you something about tastes and compulsions, doesn't it?

Which is the first book printed from movable type?

Answer: Most easy, you will say and mention the Gutenburg Bible, c.1456, but this book tells you that in all likelihood it is *Donatus Latin Grammar* brought out five years earlier. We are reminded, further, that printing from movable type was known in China long before Europe "invented" it. At any rate, the earliest printed book is a Buddhist work narrating a conversation between the Buddha and Subhuti, printed in 868 A.D. It was found, with a colophon, in 1900 in the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas in Turkestan.

Besides such statistics, the book is rich in anecdotes about authors, vanities and quarrels (with publishers, critics and fellow authors), about lost manuscripts and about inane rejections and assessments, as well as gaffes, gags, witticisms and quotable quotes.

It is only a few authors who are modest. Most are very conscious about the first person singular. Victor Hugo thought that Paris should be renamed after him after *Les Miserables* was published simultaneously in nine languages on the same day in April 1862.

Lost manuscripts are always fascinating to read about. The book recounts a number of stories. Two of them—one lost, one almost—involves Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens. John Stuart Mill had borrowed the first volume of *The French Revolution* from Carlyle. Some days later, there was a knock at the Carlyles' door. When they opened it, it was an ashen-faced, tongue-tied Mill. Little by little, the story came out. Mill had left the manuscript spread in his study. His maid, a fastidious woman, took it to be waste paper and burned the lot.

Carlyle had not only to swallow the news but pacify Mill. Mill offered 200 pounds by way of compensation but Carlyle accepted only half. Painfully and heroically he rewrote it all.

When Dickens had completed the first part of *Our Mutual Friend*, he was returning from France. The train was derailed over a bridge. Miraculously his compartment was intact. Dickens chivalrously rescued two ladies. Then he remembered his book and his flask of brandy and, risking danger, he climbed the carriage again and retrieved them.

But a manuscript which was irretrievably lost on a train was T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Always a reluctant author, he reported to friends with relief: "I have lost the damned thing". He was persuaded with great difficulty to re-do it.

Why does a publisher accept a book? John Baker has been candid and given six reasons:

-Because the firm has published the author before.

-Because the book is in line with the firm's policy.

-As a service to scholarship or literature (which means the Managing Director likes it).

-Because the author is a friend.

-Because "if we don't, someone else will".

-To cover the overheads.

Yet the list of books and authors that later became famous but found it hard to catch the publisher's kindly eye is quite long.

Dubliners of James Joyce is said to have been rejected by twenty-two publishers. His frustrations did not end there. *A Potrait of the Artist as a Young Man* also found no takers and he threw it into the fire but his wife saved it. E.E. Cummings dedicated his *No Thanks* to the fourteen publishers who had rejected it and his mother who paid for its printing. Even John Creasy who went on to write 564 thrillers (hence the publishers' sales pitch "Creasy for Crime") had, to begin with, received 743 rejection slips.

Some authors' thoughts on books, authorship and critics' role:

Anatole France: *There are no bad books any more than there are ugly women.*

H.L.Mencken: *In the main there are two sorts of books: those that no one reads and those that no one ought to read.*

Benjamin Disraeli: *Nine-tenths of existing books are nonsense and the clever books are the refuatation of that nonsense.*

Ernest Hemingway: *All the good books have one thing in common—they are truer than if they had really happened.*

George Simenon: *Writing is not a profession, but a vocation of unhappiness.*

Geroge Orwell: *Writing a book is a long, exhaustive struggle, like a long bout of illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand.*

Norman Douglas: *Publishers are like wives. Everyone wants someone else's—but when you have them, where's the difference?*

Logan Pearsall Smith: *A best seller is the gilded tomb of mediocre talent.* (Most of us would agree, having seen the statistics given earlier on).

E.M.Forster: *One always tends to over-praise a long book because one has gone through it.*

Sydney Smith: *I never read a book before reviewing;*

Sharada Prasad worked in the Indian Express, *and was later Editor* Yojana. *He was Information Adviser to the Prime Minister for over eighteen years.*

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it prejudices a man so.

This brings us to the relationship between authors and critics. It has never been a comfortable one. All students of literature know how critics hurt Keats and Shelley. Byron hit back at critics in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers". W.B. Yeats was turned down by Macmillan because the redoubtable John Morley said he found neither rhyme nor reason in one single page of his. Yeats himself did not include Wilfred Owen in an anthology because "I consider him unworthy of poets" F.L.Lucas said of *The Waste Land* that it "was unintelligible, the borrowings cheap and the notes useless". To Joseph Conard, D.H.Lawrence was "filth, nothing but obscenities."

Nicholas' book takes its title from the fact that he asked a large number of well-known writers of various genres to make lists of books they liked most. He also culled out famous authors' favourite books.

The philosopher, Sir Alfred Ayer, said the following had most influenced him:

Betrand Russell's *Sceptical Essays.*

W.H.Leeky's *A History of European Morals.*

Voltaire's *Candide.*

David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature.*

J.S.Mill's *Autobiography.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus.*

P.D. James has offered this list of six greatest masters or mistresses of detective fiction:

Wilkie Collins, Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham.

The architect Sir Hugh Casson said he had most enjoyed:

As a child, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows.*

As a student, Kenneth Clark's *The Gothic Revival.*

As a young man, Harold Nicolson's *Some People.*

As a middle aged man, Evelyn Waugh's *The War Trilogy.*

As an elderly man, John Ruskin's *Praeterita.*

As an old man, John Betjeman's *Summoned by Bells.*

Tom Rosenthal's list of six books he would have liked to have published:

Tristram Shandy, The Dictionary of National Biography, The Oxford English Dictionary, Nastromo, David Copperfield and Ulysses.

Arnold Bennet thought that the twelve best novels ever published were:

The Brothers Karamazov, The Idiot, The House of the Dead, Crime and Punishment, Anna Karenina, War and Peace, Ressurrection, Torrents of Spring, Virgin Soil Upturned, On the Eve, Fathers and Children and Dead Souls.

Note that all are Russian.

Bernard Crick's list of books which had influenced him most:

Harold Laski's *Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time.*

Montaigne's *Essays.*

T.S.Elliot's *Collected Poems.*

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy.*

Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik.*

Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

Machiavelli's *Discourses.*

Parsons also asked some writers which books they would like to have with them if shipwrecked on a desert island. One made the commonsensical remark that they should be long books. But the wittiest reply by Quentin Crisp was:

A manual on how to build a seaworthy boat.

A manual on how to navigate a small craft in high seas.

A manual on how to attract the attention of rescue teams.

A manual on recipes requiring no food and no stove.

A tailoring manual on making clothes from palm leaves, preferably by Pierre Cardin.

An L.P. saying "Help".

Parsons lists some unbelievable gaffes that even careful authors have been guilty of. Two of them should suffice. Elliot in *The Mill on the Floss:* "Mrs Glegg had doubtless the glossiest and crispest brown curls in her drawer, as well as curls in various degrees of fuzzy laxness." Dr. Johnson in his *Preface to Shakespeare:* "That confidence which presumes to do, by surveying the surface, what labour can perform, by penetrating the bottom."

There are accounts of the calamities that befell authors. Specially painful to read are the life stories of Tasso, De Quincey and Dostoevsky, and the circumstances in which Oscar Wilde, Rupert Brooke and Arnold Bennett died. Bennett wanted to demonstrate that the water of Paris was quite safe. He drank from a carafe in a Paris hotel in 1936 and died from typhoid.

There is humour in books, even when no humour is intended. A group wishing to lighten the solemnity of the Frankfurt Book Fair has instituted prizes for the most improbable title among the books on display during any given year. The top awards, taking only three years, have gone to *Proceedings of the Second International Workshop on Nude Mice* (University of Tokyo Press) in 1979, *The Madam as Entrepreneur, Career Management in House Prostitution* (Transaction Press) in 1979, and *Joy of Chickens* (Prentice Hall) in 1980. Among the runnners up have been *Ethics of Bureaucrats, Do it Yourself Brain Surgery, Where do Babies Come From and How to Keep Them There, The Water of Life—A Treatise on Urine Therapy* (Yes, that's from our own India), *Wife Beating: A Systems Theory Approach* and *Natural Bust Enlargement: How to Use the Other 90 per cent of your Mind to Increase the Size of Your Breasts.*

The Bible is not considered a source of humour. But the printer's devil played a prank when a particular Bible was being printed in 1631. In Exodus 20: 14 the negative got dropped and the line read: "Thou shalt commit adultery."

But the book is not all jokes and jollity. After sections dealing with "Authors", "Books", "Publishers" and "Readers and Reviewers", there is a fifth section entitled "Books and Their Enemies". It is a sombre and chastening experience to read it. Man has worshipped books and burnt them. Authors have been hailed and jailed. Those who have been pilloried, tortured and hanged or shot make a long list. They are a tribute to the power of the book. Book burning has a long history. A Chinese emperor in 212 B.C. destroyed all books, including those of Confucius, because he wanted recorded history to begin with himself. Caliph Omar in 640 A.D. ordered the torch to be put to 200,000 volumes of the Alexandria Library. Savanarola thought that books were vanities and there were huge bonfires of books in Florence, including those of Dante. The Nazis organised a countrywide burning of books by Jews and Communists on 10 May 1933.

Books have been maimed, mutilated or muffled in the name of morality. Everyone knows of the exertions of Dr. Thomas Bowdler. It has now been discovered that the driving force behind him was his sister, Henrietta Maria. Between them, brother and sister removed "everything that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty" in Shakespeare, in the process lopping off 10 per cent of all that was in the original. They tried their hand at even editing Gibbon.

Walt Whitman had a robust comment on this kind of mutilation: "Damn all expurgated books. The dirtiest book of all is the expurgated book."

It is not governments and churches alone who have practised censorship. Families have practised it too. The heirs burnt Byron's memoirs and Sir Richard Burton's papers. Even publishers have enforced their own brand of thought control. Orwell's *Animal Farm* was rejected by Victor Gollancz, Faber and Cape on the grounds that its publication would embarrass Britain's wartime ally.

Parsons gives a long account of banned books and an impressive roll-call of persecuted authors, who include Shelley, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Walt Whitman and Havelock Ellis. The books of D.H. Lawrence, Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov have been seized and destroyed by British and American customs authorities. In Boston, home of the bean and the cod and of Puritanism, Bertrand Russell's *What I Believe* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* were considered corrupting.

Persecutors of authors have sometimes done a service to literature. Parsons lists some of the well-known master pieces written in jail: Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae,* Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World,* John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis.* Had he known India, he would not have failed to mention the great books written by our nation-builders in British jails. And what about the books written in the last sixty years in lands where the whole country was a jail? ❑

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Hindi Theatre at the Crossroads

Reeta Sondhi

Natrang, a quarterly Hindi theatre magazine, Edited by N. C. Jain. Fiftieth Special Number (Vol.XIII, No. 50–52, Mar–Dec. 1989), pp. 236, Rs. 30.00, (Annual Subscription; Rs. 30.00 (Individuals) & Rs.40.00 (Institutions & Libraries)

The fiftieth special number of Natrang commemorates a quarter century of contemporary Hindi theatre and recreates the spirit of the times. The richest decade of those twenty-five years was perhaps the 1970s, a period of much flux: perversely a period of a loss of innocence. Though nothing fantastic was done by artiste or audience as protest, their anguish had shown. Companions in theatre had sat together, sometimes surreptitiously, to weep in unison over a Brechtian *Galileo* or an *Uddhavasta Dharmashala*:

That to one's mind is what a theatre movement is all about: a sharing of one's angst; a live communication made through a deeply involving artistic endeavour. And that is what could not be sustained. When it came down to the sheer economics of supporting a thinking, feeling group which could best survive in its togetherness, patrons shrugged the theatre artistes off. It became more profitable to shower crores of rupees on melas and utsavas—a consumeristic activity—rather than to follow a nurturant approach. In all this money splash and art splash (points M.K. Raina in his article) not one single new production got sponsored. Three or four old plays which had proved popular about ten or fifteen years earlier were recommissioned for export. No forum was created for serious discussion. No scheme was initiated for setting up new repertories or providing deserving artistes with the means to work. The latter part of the 80s was an era of middlemen and kickbacks. An era of middlemen and kickbaacks it remained.

This deliberate lack of vision on the part of the government is the one single factor which has depleted talent. The National School of Drama has not succeeded in doing much for its students either. It did establish one professional repertory, the first of its kind, in 1964, but after that nothing more was pursued. There should have been several repertories by now spread all over the country.

The drift into television in the mid-80s was the second reason for the decline of the movement. But this is a trend which does not seem to alarm the artistes. Rajendranath, director, iterates that theatre never dies. Uttara Baokar, actress, is convinced that the lure of theatre would bring back artistes if only they were provided with some security and promise of work.

The Natrang number which has been meticulously structured through a set of probing questions and topical controversies is presented in the form of interviews and articles. It covers a large group of eminent playwrights, directors, actors, translators, Sanskrit scholars and a few interested artistes from other disciplines. Love's labour is provided by N.C. Jain (editor), Devendra Raj Ankur, Mahesh Anand and Kirti Jain (interviewers). The document which resurrects the evolution of Hindi theatre (in fact the evolution of a pan-Indian theatre movement) has Habib Tanvir's article spanning 60 years of his acting career as the focal point. Tanvir discusses the Parsi Theatre in an indulgent mock-Parsi theatre style and the IPT luminaries with requisite regard and intimacy. In his own period he finds the Nacha artistes from Chhatisgarh, Dharmavir Bharti's Andha Yug and the plays of Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Badal Sircar, as source material for structuring a training programme for the actors. He acknowledges the contribution of NSD in using the dramatic literature mentioned above for the purpose, but finds the end product limited. The exceptions according to him are Nasiruddin Shah, Om Puri, Manohar Singh, Uttara Baokar and Surekha Sikri. What he does not mention is that the two most important theatre personalities that the period has produced are he himself and E. Alkazi. Their work has shaped the work and thought of those following them and even as early as in the 60s, when they had just about commenced their careers in earnest, there was evidence of the future directions that the course of the movement would take. It was a search for an Indian identity both folk and urban inspired—an impulse to break away from the western proscenium, an urge to review and replace the existing rhetoric with common speech and a viable theatre language which could give expression to the contemporary man. In this last mentioned effort Mohan Rakesh's contribution cannot be minimised. In fact, it is the rhythm of the speech pattern devised by him which has become the most credible verbal idiom of urban communication on stage as well as in the new wave film.

Alkazi's influence started becoming evident almost as soon as he took over as Director, National School of Drama (NSD). He developed a methodology of training, evolved a syllabus, introduced various styles of production—and even set up systems of administration. He lost little time in creating a library of scripts by putting his students to work on translations of world classics. He began looking for original Indian scripts and working with Hindi playwrights. As for design and stage techniques, the concept had never before been introduced in quite this manner of elegance or scale.

In 1962-63 he produced Rakesh's *Ashad Ka Ek Din* in an open air arena bringing the Delhi audience out of the proscenium for the first time. It was looking at theatre from different angles. It was finding for the actor, the playwright and the audience, different levels of experience, different types of relationships—all redefined by different types of space used. The play to be mentioned here would be *Andha Yug* as it has opened up several layers of consciousness in terms of space. Alkazi's choice fell on this modern classic because it drew its immanent contemporaniety from tradition. It was endowed with great relevance both for the psyche of a liberated nation and an emergent theatre movement in the process of probing its metaphysical roots. It was not quite a readymade script in terms of production techniques but Bharti and Alkazi worked on it together, starting the collaborative approach between playwright and director.

Coming to Habib Tanvir, his search was much more individualistic; his impact much slower. He

Reeta Sondhi, who works in mobile creches as a voluntary worker, has been writing critical assessments of theatre for many years.

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himself belonged to an urban milieu despite his childhood exposure to the Nacha artistes. Therefore, in order to be credible he had to first learn their art and then internalise their culture and tradition. Starting as early as in the 1950s, it took him over twenty years to work out a method of plausible intervention.

There are others who have been inspired like him and at least one among them is an NSD alumni. Due, therefore, to his exposure to a liberal course of theatre education, Rattan Thiyyam takes the lead in Manipur and is closely followed by Kanhai Lal and Ebomtombi in the creation of their quaint theatric symphonies and lyrics. In Kerala there is K.M. Pannikar who uses the minimal script as base material and gives it the epical treatment. All these artistes are engrossed in their individualistic "riyaz" with groups and repertoires of their own. The grammar of their theatre is based on the vocabulary of the local performing arts of which they themselves are intimate parts.

However, the bureaucratic intellect in the form of Sangeet Natak Academi (SNA), failed to comprehend the reasons of their singular success and decided to replicate. They created a scheme of assistance for young theatre workers who could gate-crash into a folk form and work with it for a year. At the end of it they were expected to produce an indigenous form-oriented play which would identify with the modern sensibility. While there is a deliberate ambiguity in the term "modern sensibility" the emphasis on form precludes the story of the psychological man who is in a permanent state of strife with his surroundings. In other words, the theme of our times did not get written. Instead, a rambling sort of revivalism, reinforced by song, dance and colourful rituals got pushed centre-stage. Fortunately the end product was so bad that the audience did not get hooked on to it. But in the process, the carefully built theatre movement of the previous two decades got dismissed. The artistes dispersed!

The scheme has lasted five years, having supported on an average twenty-four directors per year. There are perhaps three plays out of the lot that are good. One of them, a master-piece, is of course, Rattan Thiyyam's *Chakravyuh*, which would have been produced any way. However, with the advent of two theatre persons, Girish Karnad (playright) and Rajinder Paul (critic) into SNA, the scope of the scheme has been rationalised. From this year, an attempt has been made to offer assistance to deserving candidates according to their individual predilections and training. The only stipulation is that the productions should be new and the plays should be original Hindi scripts or translations/adaptations of original works from other Indian languages. A serious effort is also being made for stimulating playwriting.

That to one's mind is what a theatre movement is all about: a sharing of one's angst; a live communication made through a deeply involving artistic endeavour. And that is what could not be sustained. When it came down to the sheer economics of supporting a thinking, feeling group which could best survive in its togetherness, patrons shrugged the theatre artistes off. It became more profitable to shower crores of rupees on melas and utsavas—a consumeristic activity—rather than to follow a nurturant approach.

There are several other issues that have been discussed in the Natrang special as possible causes of the decline of Hindi theatre. The one which comes up time and again pertains to the lack of original scripts and the overdependence on translations/adaptations of foreign plays as well as plays from other Indian languages. Playrights are agreed that though they have the literature they do not have the skills that a theatre production entails. Therefore, the necessity of a collaborative effort. But the concept of playright as part of a performing group can become viable only if the economic status of theatre is realistically assessed. Theatre as a part time is a valiant endeavour but it is time it was recognised as a full fledged profession. As for translations, particularly of foreign scripts (a theme which has always caused theatre workers immense discomfiture) it is heartening to note that the playwrights interviewed have themselves maintained the validity of these, claiming that they are a source of enrichment and exposure for theatre in all its aspects and should therefore continue.

The other reason given for the decline of Hindi theatre is that it has failed to mobilise a large audience. Bansi Kaul (director) does not find merit in this argument and gives his supportive viewpoint a refreshingly positive turn. He contends that a large, established audience is a liability for experimentation as the compulsion to maintain the occupancy rate in the auditorium is great. He cites the examples of Maharastra and Bengal where extremely talented stage artistes have to stoop to conquer in order to retain their massive following. The audience in the Hindi belt is small enough to accomodate experimentation and large enough to keep it going. He clinches this line of thought by pointing out that it was because of the Hindi theatre's orientaion towards experimentation that original Indian scripts first got translated into Hindi and then, after acceptance at the national level, found their way into languages and dialects of other states. A chain reaction of this sort has created for the country a common literature, a cross-cultural growth and perhaps a national theatre.

Other interesting areas which Natrang has covered and which one would have to preclude from the scope of this review due to the lack of space are the dynamic use of dialects, particularly in adaptations of foreign scripts, the evolution and reach of street theatre and the release of Sanskrit drama from the confines of a Ravi Verma canvas. ❑

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Home-spun Excellence

Geeta Dharmarajan

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF MODERN INDIAN SHORT STORIES

Edited by Stephen Alter and Wimal Dissanayake

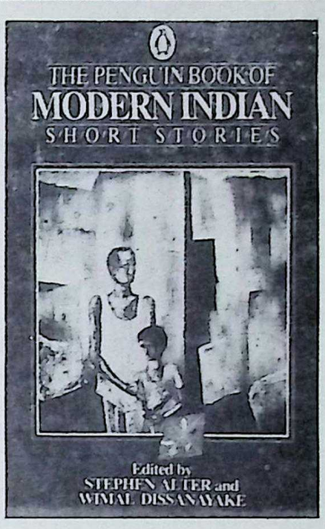
Penguin (India), 1989, pp. 255, Rs. 55.00

One magical morning in May you sit under the freshly-washed peepul tree whose leaves quiver in answer to some unfelt breeze, and discover Telenapota. You have, of course, heard much about Pritish Nandy's translation of Premendra Mitra. You get a taste of it when you read, "The Discovery of Telenapota," now, and are promptly drawn into a world depicted in the future tense. . . *You will try to sit up. A strange sensation will once again make you feel as if you have left behind the world of the living and entered a phantom universe peopled only by memories.* You are the reader, the narrator, and the strange person who makes an impossible promise to a dying blind woman. You are astounded at the genuineness of the promise, and the simplicity of it all. And then, once out of Telenapota, the magic ceases to be and "Telenapota, discovered for one brief moment, will be lost again in the timeless dark of night." Telenapota seems to stand for all that is human in a crass, urban world.

"Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade," Italo Calvino exhorts his reader, (again "you,") at the start of his *If on a Winter's Night, a Traveller.* You remember these words as you read "Telenapota". Metafiction techniques intrude in Calvino; they strengthen the story in Mitra. Mitra crosses the boundaries between real life and fiction, dream and action, challenging our very basic notions of what is real. This warm, wonderfully nostalgic story starts off the Penguin *Book of Modern Indian Stories* and helps you suspend judgement and read on.

As you read on, moving into new worlds, new imaginary lives, new explorations of the human conditions, you wonder why there are not more short story collections. There is an immediacy to the short story that is not always present in the novel; and they come in chewable bits! What more can anyone ask for than, say, Mahadevi Verma's "Ghisa" (translated from the Hindi), "The Wart," (from the Malayalam) by O.V. Vijayan, "The Somersault," (from the Oriya) by Gopinath Mohanty, or P.S. Rege's "Savitri," written originally in Marathi and translated with great felicity and poise by Kumud Mehta.

From letters written by a woman who steadfastly refuses to say anything much about herself, "Savitri" unfolds. You get tantalising glimpses of people—Gurupadaswamy, Lore, Appa, Edgeworth, Rajama, Namura and the someone called "you," of course. You hear snippets of information: "Prof. Joshi has just got married. His bride is a well-known tennis star from Poona. She used to be his pupil. But he says there was no love or anything of the sort before. From this one may safely conclude that their life will be happy. Going by the photograph, she appears very smart and practical." A little later, you get a whole story in 11 words: "Draupadi tore off her gorgeous saree to bandage Krishna's injured finger." Ah, is that so? you think as you read on and collect one more piece of useless information. The story rambles on and then ends with a peacock, as it started with one: "When you come to think of it, does the peacock himself know how to dance? He lifts up a foot. . .then loses his balance, and to regain it he sets it down. . .and lifts the other. This goes on in the same fashion over and over again, *ad infinitum.* Those who look on call it dance." The story seems to be a nonstarter from the word go, yet, how does it manage to stay in the memory? The translation could not have been better if Rege had written this originally in English. Maybe this will become your one main reason for buying this book.



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Nirmal Verma's "Deliverance," is almost as old as the hills where it is located, yet, the story is such that you read right through, again. A good story should be just so. Rereading, you may find that the images are not new. "The stars shone as if scrubbed clean by rain"; the wind "lashed at the walls and shook the roof"; and whenever a bus goes by it, as expected, throws "shadows of trees conjured up by its headlights" on the wall and the "hiss" of the bus tyres, of course, "lingered in the air." Authentic but mundane descriptions. Problems with the translation? Sujit Mukherjee says in his book that the originality of a story in an Indian language is revealed when it is translated into English, but surely this cannot be the problem with such a well-loved story as "Deliverance," and, as you come to the end and "the sun, straining through the branches of the plane tree beside the elder brother's cell, "falls across his feet," the narrator bends down to pay his respects, "...and felt the hand on my head, his fingers stroking my hair, his burning touch sending waves of heat through my body", a lump rises in your throat. Your eyes burn. Indian sentimentality at play, but then, any story that can touch one so is world class, whatever be the power of its English-translation description!

And so we come to the eighteenth story, "Amasa," by Devanuru Mahadeva. A mere fragment with many interesting touches, and you, who accepted the loose ends and abrupt phrases of "Savitri" wonder if this is part of a novel. Is it here because A.K. Ramanujam is one of the translators? Why is it the last story? Isn't the last story as important as the first?

Yet, finally, it does not matter and you close the book, place fingers over your eyes and, like the headman before whose eyes Amasa's Tiger Dance "came dancing its many and wondrous dance" you sit back and savour the stories.

The judgmental me comes into play later. The stories in this collection, eighteen of them, vary in quality of story and translation. The editors concede that many of the stories here have "already been widely antholo-

Geeta Dharmarajan is a writer of fiction for children and has recently published a collection of stories entitled Super Brat and Other Stories.

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gized," and I find fault with them for this because India does not lack in creative writing or in world class stories.

Indians do not speak with a unified voice, and in that lies our strength and interest. Each short story comes as part of a tradition that is as different, often, as the script of the language it is written in; thus, the Urdu story has a lineage that is different from, say, the Tamil, the Bengali or the Malayalam, and, though, many of the individualities have been rubbed out of many of them due to the often unacknowledged influence of the Western short story form, yet, in translation, the best stand out, as they talk for themselves. I only wish that Bharati Mukherjee's story, "Nostalgia," (in spite of her assured place in the world of short story writers) had been reexamined by the editors before inclusion. It sounds alien amongst the Indian stories, and, if I many say so, a little artificial. Even Amrita Pritam's story, which is scanty, and Anita Desai's story, which I consider one of my lesser favourites from her collection, *Games at Twilight*, stay longer in the memory.

It was in reading "Savitri," more than in reading any other that I felt it was quite unjust on the part of Penguin not to have put in a little something about the translators. It would have added a certain value to the book.

Doing a collection of short stories is difficult. Only a publisher like Penguin could have undertaken such a tremendous time-consuming task of choosing outstanding stories from the regional languages and getting excellent translations of the same. Yet, I wonder if the editors even looked at any stories in the languages in which they were originally written. Maybe, *maybe*, an Indian editor would have done it differently since, finally, all editors' choices are subjective. I wonder why Penguin needed to go in for foreigners as editors; can you imagine a collection of British, American or French stories in their native language being edited by an Indian? I also wonder why Alter and Dissanayake say that "the three most glaring omissions would be Rabindranath Tagore, Prem Chand, and Sadat Hasan Manto." Anyone, familiar with Indian language writing can name at least half a dozen more. But, again, the editors seem to be only thinking of those who have been translated already. It might have been better if they had not mentioned any names at all. I would like to think that this book is one more appetizer that prepares you for what is in store in the many Indian languages.

After having read the whole book, over many days, turning to stories that interested me as of that moment, I went through the rather challenging task of marking the stories with stars. Three stars for the outstanding, amongst the stories here; two-and-a-half-star stories next, and so on. Seven got three-star rating; three got half stars. But, I will not impose my taste on yours. The good becomes better when one discovers it for oneself. So. Happy reading! ❑

Forging an Epistemology of Resistance: Dalit Writing in Gujarati

Svati Joshi

SARVANAM (An anthology of Gujarati Dalit Literature)
Edited by Neerav Patel and Chandu Maheria for *Swaman*,
Foundation for Dalit Literature, 1989, pp. 176, Rs. 20.00

The Dalit movement in Gujarat has not been a sustained political activity, as, say, in Maharashtra, partly perhaps because of the lack of a historical tradition with leaders like Jyotiba Phule and Ambedkar and partly because of the absence of a socialist tradition in Gujarat. The fact that the two major anti-reservation movements in Gujarat in the eighties have failed to mobilise and consolidate the Dalits into a political force reveals the contradictions that exist in the social and political life of Gujarat. The two major ruling caste groups in Gujarat, the Patels, the middle-class business and agrarian community who spearheaded the anti-reservation movements and the Kshatriyas who provided leadership to the Congress rule in the state since 1984 until the recent elections, have effectively managed to keep the backward classes divided and it may perhaps be long before they can organise themselves into a collective struggle.

In the absence of an organised political activity literature has been the usual form of protest the Dalits have taken. In 1981, for instance, when a Dalit youth was brutally murdered in Jethalpur village in North Gujarat, the incident which coincided with the anti-reservation riots, *Aakrosh*, a dalit journal started in 1978, brought out a special number on the event. Recognised as a potential threat, the state immediately had the copies of the journal confiscated and the leading writers sent to prison. The foundation for Dalit Literature at the end or nearly a decade old literary activity is a conscious and concerted attempt by the Dalit writers at the formation of their ideology with a clear objective of interrogating the dominant literary tradition as well as the historical and social configurations which have produced it and have consistently sought to marginalise them. *Sarvanam*, its first publication, has opened up a discursive space that has never fully existed in Gujarati where the intricate and often invisible relation between knowledge and power can be laid out and examined at the same time when strategies of struggle can be forged towards a meaningful social reconstruction.

An important way in which *Sarvanam* undertakes to analyse the given literary tradition is to question the validity of the category 'Literature' itself, and the hierarchical and elitist ways in which different literary productions are valued. This it achieves, first, by including texts which are not usually considered 'literary', texts such as news reports and archival documents on the oppression of the Dalits, resolutions passed by various Dalit communities to fight oppressive social customs, petitions presented to local authorities for improvement in their working conditions, and public manifestos. Second, the collection has essays which engage in a debate with some Gujarati literary texts and writers and interpret them not in the formalist categories of style and structure but as products of larger historical and cultural configurations, thus also redefining the function of criticism as an ideological practice. And third, there are richly documented essays on the Dalit folk tradition as well as essays on aspects of social history of the Dalits which together re-collect a shared imaginative and historical heritage of a community that has been suppressed and marginalised by the dominant tradition.

The collection has two important theoretical essays, a paper by Neerav Patel, an Ahmedabad based leading Dalit writer, presented at a literary conference organised by Sahitya Parishad, a dominant literary organisation in Gujarat, and the other by Manishi Jani, a student leader in the Navnirman movement of 1974, which set out to formulate the premises and parameters within which a genuinely effective discourse for social change can be generated. Both essays caution against the critical and political complacency that tends to treat the Dalit question in isolation and is informed by such liberal notions as equality and reform in the status of the Dalits which have only further eliminated them from any meaningful participation in social processes. Both insist on the need for a different object of enquiry, directed towards analysing and questioning the essentially Brahiministic and Aryan identity of the traditional literary and philosophical discourses which have pushed them to the margins. Jani refers to the *Saarth Gujarati Jodanikosh*, the standard Gujarati Dictionary published by Gujarat Vidyapith founded by Gandhi, which defines words like 'Dhedh', 'Bhangio', 'Vaghari', words used for the Dalits, as uncivilised, uncouth, lowly, stupid and so on. It is here, Jani suggests, that the site for the struggle must

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be located for it is here that the knowledge about the Dalits in its most dangerous form is pro-duced. This involves, for Jani, recognising and laying bare the often invisible, because also often unconsciously internalised even by the oppressed, structures of dominant ideology that is informed and reinforced by the complicity of the dominant economic and political systems and the hierarchical caste formations. If it is necessary to constantly question and dismantle the received structures of knowledge, both Patel and Jani equally emphasise the importance of a conscious reworking of the narratives of the oppressed, largely preserved in oral and folk forms, not, of course, in order to create a fixed and fetishized counter tradition, but in order to reappropriate those resources of language and behavior which have resisted contamination and destruction, and which have also most resolutely sought to alter history. In fact the oral and folk performances often become an arena for subversive strategies. Patel gives an example of a folk performance in which the theatrical space was suddenly transformed into the real social space in which an actual, bloodless revolution occurred! A king is engaged in a dialogue with his chief-minister:

> King: Pradhanji, our victory procession shall pass through all the streets and corners of the city.
> Minister: But, my lord, what about this wall?
> King: Knock it down instantly. That is my order.

And while the audience consisting of the Dalits and Caste Hindus were absorbed in watching the performance the actual wall separating the Dalit and Hindu residences was knocked down by the performers!

Sarvanam has several texts which set out to reinterpret and reappropriate the past so as to alter the dominant narrative of history. In a poem called "Identity", Yashwant Vaghela traces his genealogy through the socially outcasts from the beginning of the hierarchical Brahminical society:

> Here
> My identity
> They have established,
> Even then
> Unknowingly someone
> Asks me -
> 'Who are you?'
> I say:
> This head is Sambook,
> This hand is Eklavya,
> The heart is Kabir,
> I am Satyakam Jabali.
> And yet
> These feet still belong to a Shudra.
> But
> Today
> I am a human being.
> Is that not enough?
> and you - ?

The poem recalls those untouchables who were excluded from sharing knowledge and power by the ruling classes and were brutally punished for having defied structures of dominance. In thus recollecting the history of those who provided counter structures of resistance and affiliating himself with them the poet feels empowered to resist oppression in a resolute and responsible manner.

The play, "Sanjay and 'A'" by Dalpat Chauhan, one of the leading Dalit writers in Gujarati, brilliantly revamps the myth of the golden age of the past by placing it under the scrutiny of the emerging epistemology of the revolutionary struggle of the present. Sanjay, the clairvoyant narrator of the war in the *Mahabharat* is seen, as the play opens, trapped between the demonstration of mill workers shouting soulful slogans for justice and the police firing. Frightened by the spectacle, Sanjay tries to escape from this 'kaliyug' to the golden age of the past but is stopped by 'A', a Dalit who has yet not acquired a name but who is gripped with the oppressive social reality of the present. While Sanjay desperately tries to regress into the past, 'A' relentlessly struggles to push the present of the collective revolutionary struggles into a future of emancipatory possibilities. During the course of the play Sanjay sees characters of ancient myths like Draupadi and Harishchandra transformed when placed in the present context as if history was being rewritten. When a woman stripped naked in public is admonished that as a slave's wife she becomes the ruler's property, she curses her husband as an impotent hypocrite and longs to burn the religious texts which have always described her as a man's property and excluded her from participation in public life. An innocent minor boy of eight serving at a tea shop brings to 'A' 's mind his prototype Rohit whose father King Harishchandra had sold him and his mother for the sake of 'truth'. This provokes 'A''s wrath against the king and all those who perpetuate exploitation of children and women in the name of truth. As the play draws to a close the past is clearly seen as the most oppressive, heirarchical religious society from the perspective of the revolutionary ideology of the present. With the revamping of the retrospective narrative the play is able to project into the prospective horizon of the future as more than an empty Utopia.

Pravin Gadhavi's story "Matsyagandha" is the retelling of the life of the shudra daughter of a fisherman whom Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur married and who thus became the queen mother of the Aryavart. Here also the normal narrative ordering of history is reversed as a new set of facts and relations are foregrounded. At the end of her life Matsyagandha returns to her native woods on the banks of the river Ganga to find them emptied of the Shudra population. Unable to pay tax, not having the right to fish in the river, weaponless and untouchable, they have fled southward. She is gripped with despair that trapped as she was within the palace and a mere object of the kings erotic desire she did not do anything even to condone their taxes. But she soon realises that no meaningful freedom could be granted to them from within the palace. For that she should have lived and fought with them. It is this awareness and the deep sense of pain that accompanies it which give Matsyagandha a special kind of dignity and self-respect that she is denied in the master discourse.

The Dalit question is inextricably linked with the gender question for since the beginning of the Brahminical tradition Shudras and women have always been bracketed together and excluded from all hierarchical power structures. There are two personal accounts in *Sarvanam* by women who struggle against all odds to acquire education and survive in a caste-ridden patriarchal society, and yet find themselves doubly trapped as women and Dalits. Dr. Taraben Chauhan recounts how when she finds a job in a village health centre and arrives in the village with a year old son, leaving the husband behind in the city, she finds herself literally ostracized as nobody offers her a place to stay. In spite of her learning and experience she still remains on the periphery of the social life of the village. As the village shopkeeper, who always sprinkled water on the money before taking it from her, puts it: "She may be a doctor but she still is a harijan woman. Touching her would be a sin." Manjula Solanki's life is one of endless strife to continue studies against pressures from home and outside. Being a girl she is expected to do all the household work and barely manages to attend college and lives under a constant threat from aunt of discontinuing her studies. Being a Dalit woman she feels a sense of embarassement with her teachers and friends whom she cannot even invite home because of her low caste. The lives of Taraben and Manjula are lives of women who refuse to be victiins of history and are determined to participate in it and change it.

In a literary ambience of individualistic obsession with despair and alienation, and the linguistic profusion which usually accompanies it, such questions of social belonging and resistance to oppression have never fully been raised in Gujarati. What *Sarvanam* has achieved indeed is that it has introduced a critical practice in the literary debate which has brought literature under the scrutiny of history and politics for the first time in such an impelling manner. This is certainly a significant gain for Dalit writing and it may also force the mainstream writers to at least recognise this as a problem. Neerav Patel considers the invitation to present a paper at the mainstream literary conference a real achievement for the Dalits since the old times when they were not even allowed to listen to the Brahimnical texts and thinks that under mounting pressures contemporary Gujarati writing which has its ideological moorings in western modernism will have eventually to confront questions which have been suppressed for far too long. And yet, at the same time he cautions against the danger of assimilation of Dalit writing into the dominant tradition in a state that is politically so impoverished. But then, this is also precisely why such imaginative forms of resistance as *Sarvanam* assume tremendous importance and responsibility, for in the absence of effective political life, they can generate spaces where meaningful political activity may become possible. ❑

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

OUTLINES OF ANCIENT HINDU JURISPRUDENCE

By Prof. M.S. Pandit

N.M. Tripathi, Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1989,
pp. 64, Rs. 30.00

This book, small in size, like the head of Oliver God Smith's Village School Master, contains an efficient statement of the basics of Hindu Jurisprudence. By expounding the basic similarity of jural concepts, categories and principles it provides a corrective to facile assertions that indigenous legal systems, including Hindu jurisprudence of ancient pedigree, are being expropriated and/or displaced.

Professor Pandit, like the ancient Hindu sutrakars, explains clearly but with a great economy of words in orderly sequence the foundations of ancient Hindu jurisprudence.

It is thus:

Purushartha (aims of human existence) are Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. But the main objects of human endeavour are Artha (economic well being) and Kama (happiness and enjoyment of life). The pursuit of these two objectives is governed and regulated by guidelines and injunctions regarding duty (Karthavya) and some of these are of positive import (Vidhi) and others prohibitory (Nished) in content. These constitute a part of the secular aspect of Dharma (Social and Moral Obligations and Code of Conduct). Dharma in this sense is the stabilising force (Dharma Vishvasaya Jagatah Pratishta). Dharma helps to adjust the relative claims for priority of Artha and Kama and reconcile the conflicts that arise in the pursuit of Artha and Kama.

Dharma is the Sovereign Protective Power and is binding on all including rulers (Dharmam Kshatrasya Kshatra—Kshatram = power). Medhatithi emphasises the positive aspect of Dharma (Vidhi = commands to perform duty (Karthavya). Kanada emphasises that Dharma (Law) is the instrument for realising material (Abhudhya) and spiritual (Nishrayas) well being. Thus the Hindu concept of Dharma embraces both the positivist and natural law schools of Western Jurisprudence.

Dharma is classified as Achara (Principles and rules of conduct and social relations), Vyavahara (Law as administered by the King's courts) and Prayaschita (relief against redress in respect of and compensation for injury, civil and criminal).

Hindu jurists of yore recognised the need for a mechanism that would moderate the rigidity that would normally afflict any code of conduct over a period of time. They also recognised the need to accommodate the diversities natural to the vast Bharat with its diverse communities and cultures. They assigned this twin task to Custom (Sadachar, Sishtachar, Sheel, Samya, Paurasharthi Vyavastha). Thus custom, which is classified as Deshachara, Jatyachara and Kulachara, was an instrument of both stability and change.

In seven brief chapters entitled "Family Relations", "The Joint Family", "The Law of Property", "The Law of contracts", "Torts and Crimes", Administration of Justice," and "The State" Professor Pandit expounds the basics of Hindu Jurisprudence and gives a glimpse of the level of the sophistification of analysis in regard to these subjects. His presentation gives further indication of the comprehensive appreciation by the ancient Jurists of the infinite variety of human situations and the manner in which they regulated these.

Eight forms of marriage, four of them approved forms and the rest irregular; eleven kinds of sons, three classes of heirs, Sapinda, Samanodaka, Bandhu; liability for maintenance arising out of personal relationship and possession of property; recognition of property rights of woman by the concept of stridhana; comprehensive provisions relating to ownership (svatva) which exists only when there is a thing which can be owned (sva) and a person who can own it (Swami) and the seven sources of ownership (inheritance, acquisition, purchase, conquest, investment, work done by self or through others and gifts; mortgage (Aadhi), pledge, bailment, lease, exchange, easements, nuisance; and thus runs the subjects of discourse.

Shri Y V Chandra Chud, former Chief Justice of India rightly observes in its introduction that this book "will be useful in presenting to students of legal theory a true account of ancient Hindu Jurisprudence" and that "it strives to show how the influence of ancient Hindu Law on its modern development through parliamentary legislation is a tribute to the resilience of the Hindu social order and its genius for stability and, yet for change."

T.C.A. Ramanujachari is a retired civil servant who has specialised in jurisprudence and constitutional law.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF ANCIENT KASHMIR

Edited by Pratapaditya Pal

Marg Publications, Bombay, 1989, colour and black and white illustrations, Rs. 550.00

From the earliest times till about the 14th century, when the process of Islamisation was complete, Kashmir was one of the leading centres of Hindu and Buddhist learning, the home of learned pandits who composed outstanding works such as the *Vishnudharmottara* and *Nilamata Puranas*, and one of the prominent Shakti pithas. On account of its strategic geographic location, it was open to and attracted diverse foreign elements. The Tibetans, the Chinese, the Central Asians, the Persians, the Afghans, and nearer home the Himachalis, owe considerably to this valley which is better known for its scenic beauty than for its outstanding achievements in the field of art and architecture, for its remarkable contribution to the human spirit. Today, inspite of heavy destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples and artefacts, it is still possible to piece together a fairly comprehensive history of its temple architecture, sculptures and terracottas.

For quite a few decades, the noted art historian Pratapaditya Pal based in the USA has been researching in the diverse aspects of Kashmiri art and architecture in the pre-Islamic period. He and his team consisting of Robert E. Fisher, John Siudmak, Stanislav Czuma and Chandra L. Reedy have unearthed quite a few hitherto unknown facts regarding architecture and sculpture in diverse materials such as metal, stone, ivory and terracotta. All the carefully researched write-ups give us an insight into the architectural and sculptural wealth of this beautiful valley from the fifth to the end of the 13th century A.D. The Kashmiri sculptures stand out by themselves on account of their distinctive features. There are striking affinities between the sculptures in metal, ivory stone and terracottas. It is curious that in spite of the plentiful availability of deodar wood in the valley, not a single specimen of wood sculpture has come down to us, although numerous such specimens exist in the Buddhist monasteries of Kinnaur, Lahul-Spiti and Tibet. Even the large number of ivory and metal statues have remained preserved over the centuries in the Tibetan monasteries and this is precisely the reason for all the specimens being Buddhist. The same is true of the illuminated manuscripts from Gilgit and Tholing in Tibet.

Only the terracottas, mostly from Akhanur, display distinctive Gandharan style. It is true that the origins of Kashmiri sculpture lay in Gandharan art, a region not far from Kashmir. The delicate maturity and sensitive modelling of Gandharan sculptures is discernible in those of Kashmir as well. The same reason accounts for the large number of ivory sculptures, the discovery of which has created quite a sensation in the art world in recent years. It should be emphasised that the Gandharan sculptures belonging to the Indian tradition seem to have influenced all these sculptures. Only a few terracottas display Hellenistic influence. It is doubtful, that a mutilated image reproduced on page 45 which is in pure Hellenistic style can be that of Durga.

Equally thought-provoking and stimulating is the write-up by Chandra L. Reedy on the analysis of the casting techniques adopted by Kashmiri

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metal workers. Her analytical observations will open a new avenue for future research. The x-ray laboratory tests support Pratapaditya Pal's views on the dating of the sculptures. This chapter shows the extent to which science can be made use of in piecing together the scattered threads of art history.

There are quite a few sculptural specimens that have been reproduced for the first time. Pratapaditya Pal has the advantage of access to private and public American collections which have preserved some of the best specimens of Kashmiri art. He has correctly stated that these write-ups provide a framework for a more comprehensive evaluation of an artistic tradition that had wide influence over a vast region of Asia.

The editors and publisher of Marg publications deserve a creditable mention for maintaining their standard consistently for four decades. This volume is a prize possession for scholars, art historians and all art lovers.

Dr. Subhashini Aryan is an expert on Himachal/ Himalayan art and architeture, and has written several books on the subject.

SOCIALIST ECONOMIES:
DEVELOPMENT AND PROBLEMS

Edited by R.G. Gidadhuldi

Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1989, price not stated.

Capitalism and socialism are the two facets of the same coin. The USSR and East European countries are the best examples of socialism in the world.

However, these economies have started exposing their economies and are gradually and steadily deviating from the concept of controlled economies. The USSR itself is committed to economic reforms and the recent example of Hungary is an eye opener to other socialist countries of the world.

The book under review is the outcome of a refresher course organised by the Centre of Soviet Studies, University of Bombay, in January 1987 wherein faculty members belonging to different universities presented papers for the benefit of 30 to 40 teachers of Economics in the Western Region of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The book contains 10 well drafted and informative papers, one appendix (three tables) and a detailed bibliography.

The central theme of the book is to bring to light some important papers contributed by the specialists on the various facets of development of socialist economies. The basic issues which have been discussed are theoretical issues, economic development, economic reforms and USSR and the third world.

The paper on "Ground Rent and Socialism" contains two sections and analyses the relationship of rent in the light of Marxian theory of Ground Rent.

Another paper deals with some problems of accumulation and growth in a socialist economy and much emphasis has been given to the theory of investment planning in a socialist economy during the extensive and intensive phases of its growth. It also reveals that investment policy "was the key feature of accumulation during the extensive phase—this policy has largely been carried over to the intensive period".

The paper captioned "Demographic Trends in Eastern Europe" shows demographic trends in Bulgaria, Czecho-slovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. It brings to light the fact that "population projections tend to show a gradual decline in mortality for all age-groups in the said economies except Hungary and life expectancy at birth is expected to increase in all the said countries. The general phenomenon of the ageing of the population in Eastern Europe is expected to continue. Male/female ratios are not expected to change much".

Two short papers on Soviet industrial and agricultural economies point out that "western view of prospects for industrial growth in the Soviet Union is one of pessimism and there are also many problems confronting Soviet leadership on the agricultural front".

Another paper on International Banks reveals that "Eastern European economies continue to follow a conservative debt policy with respect of loans from international Banks in future".

Two papers deal with the issues related to Economic Reforms and the contribution of Soviet leader Gorbchev in a detailed manner which is highly impressive and critical in nature.

Two other papers attempt to highlight the role of the USSR and the USA in the third world and much of the discussion is on foodgrains and petroleum. These papers have used extensive data on the various facets of the third world economies in relation to foodgrains and petroleum which are their two major problems.

The entire discussion is informative and interesting. On the whole the book is a timely addition. However, a balanced approach in relation to Eastern Europe has been the missing link. Very little discussion on the various facets of development in other socialist economies except the USSR is a serious lacuna in this study.

Dr. Badar Alam Iqbal is an Associate Professor in the Department of Commerce, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligrah.

MUGHAL DOCUMENTS 1526-1627

By S.A.I. Tirmizi

Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1989,
pp. 255, Rs. 200.00.

Professor Tirmizi, former Director of the National Archives of India, has brought his formidable expertise in handling medieval Indian documents to bear on this important publication. He has followed in the footsteps of many distinguished predecessors who gave as much of their time to editing and publishing historical documents as to the practice of history itself ever since the early years of this century. Even so, all these publications put together comprise a mere scratch of the literally millions of documents, in Persian as in regional languages, lying around in and outside the various archives, not always in the best of conditions. Therefore, we medievalists find every little effort in this direction an occasion for expression of gratitude, for these documents add a valuable corrective to the perspective derived from general statements made in the court chronicles and the European travelers' accounts.

Professor Tirmizi has put 350 documents together in a chronological order beginning with the reign of Babur and terminating with that of Jahangir. In between fall 8 documents of the Sur dynasty included as an Appendix and another 10 of "doubtful validity" as another Appendix. He has also added an erudite Introduction of 40 odd pages in which he has discussed the historical context as well as the technical aspects of the documents, taking in the pre-medieval forms of documentation in the process. One is immediately struck by the continuity of several of these forms, though the terminology and nomenclature understandably undergo changes. In about a hundred pages Professor Tirmizi has provided an extremely detailed annotation to just about any name, date or term that occurs in the documents.

The collection includes a very wide range of documents from imperial farmans to *nishans* (orders issued by a prince or princess), *parwanchas*, *parwanas* (administrative orders issued by high nobles), *sanads* (deeds, permits, etc.), *qaulnamas* (agreements), etc., etc. Wisely, Professor Tirmizi has given the substance of each of the 350 documents he has included, instead of a literal translation of the whole although one sample of each type might not have been out of place.

A good number of documents deal with sales of property as well as of superior rights in land. Sale could include high value property such as a three-roomed single storey house in Ahmedabad by one Bhoja to one Vishnu in 1574 at the formidable price of tankas 47000; another house was sold for a mere

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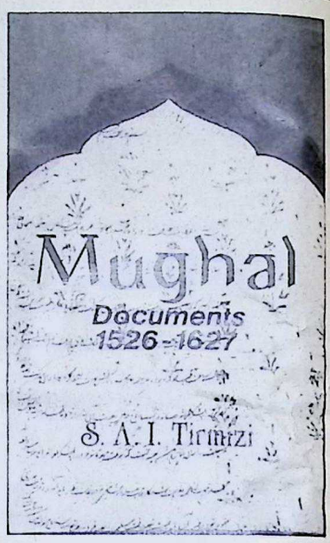
BOOKS IN BRIEF

13 in the same year. Several documents refer to the sale of *khoti*, headship of a village, and often it is part headship which is on sale. Thus one lady, Baini Jahan sold off a fifth part of her khoti obtained by her as *mihr*. This was in 1556. Earlier in 1530 the *khoti* of an entire village was put on sale. In still another case there was a dispute of claims over 3/20 parts of a village headmanship. Professor Tirmizi's rendering seems to suggest that it was part or whole of *land* which was on sale. He may perhaps be right, but phrases like the khoti of "all the 20 *biswas*" or "4 *biswas*" usually suggests the headmanship of "the entire village" or "4/20 parts of the village" and not land itself.

There are a number of typographical errors which were avoidable with good proof-reading: nineth, [p. 18], coal [for coral, p. 22], alineated [p. 25] etc. Besides Professor Tirmizi has a predilection for the use of modern terms not quite suitable for the medieval context: ransit visa, Supreme Court etc. His dilemma is understandable of course for one has to make a choice when rendering terms from one language to another. But by now medieval historians have more or less decided to stick to the originals in the absence of appropriate terms in the other language.

We look forward to more such volumes from Professor Tirmizi.

Professor Harbans Mukhia teaches medieval history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



> *The Mughal harem enjoyed considerable prestige but neither the queens nor the princesses could wield the sceptre. Notwithstanding this handicap, Maham Begam, wife of Babur, enjoyed exalted position and was allowed to sit side by side of her husband on the throne of Delhi. It is interesting to note in this connection that when Humayun offered to marry Hamidia Banu, she is reported to have first refused to consider the proposal of a person who occupied too elevated a social position for her own rank and observed, "I would rather marry a man whose lapel I can hold than one whose pedestral I can not reach." After her marriage she enjoyed the title of Maryan Makani and stood by Humayun through thick and thin. She used to issue hukms confirming the farmans issued by her son, Akbar. It was through the efforts of Hamidia Banu and Gulbadan, sister of Humayun, that reconciliation was brought about between Akbar and Salim when the latter rebelled against his father in 1601. A.D.*[112]
>
> [112] *S. A. I. Tirmizi, Edicts from the Mughal Harem (New Delhi, 1979) p. x-xiii, 41.*
>
> From *Mughal Documents 1526–1627*

SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE AND WESTERN POLICY

Edited by Gregory Flynn

Routledge, 1989, pp. xi + 418, price not stated.

That strategic policy is premised on perceptions of the adversary's military doctrine is apparent, which may be illustrated from the course of post-war superpower relations. During the early Cold War years the prevailing American belief system was founded on an implacably hostile Soviet Union, with a military doctrine premised on blitzkrieg attack and without any concern for the enormous destructiveness of nuclear conflict. These beliefs occasioned the evolution of the 'containment' policy. Later, the Berlin and Cuban Missile crises strengthened American convictions regarding the adventurous and risk-taking basis of Soviet military doctrine, leading to a conscious conflict-avoidance policy being developed. Thereafter, and following the acceptance of nuclear parity by the United States, the pursuit of arms control was deemed a suitable response to a perceived, growing Soviet understanding of the ramifications of nuclear deterrence. Traditionally, however, the Soviets have evaluated Soviet-American relations through the prism of an evolving "correlation of forces", or the sum of economic, political, moral and military forces that establish a true balance between adversaries in the international system. This perceptional dichotomy in comprehending each other's military doctrine, leading to attendant problems in meaningful communications, has bedeviled policy-making by the superpowers in the strategic area. Nevertheless, it is imperative for the superpowers, as indeed other adversaries locked in hostile-pair interactions, to seek an understanding of each other's military doctrine to evolve alternative options, and not premise their strategic policy on worst case scenario.

The six chapters in this book explore various aspects of these dilemmas. In an introductory chapter Gregory Flynn draws attention to the difficulties facing Western scholars of Soviet military doctrine and the role of images and perceptions in formulating the same. Two essays by Peter Vigor and Falk Bomsdorf explore how Western scholars reach differing assessments regarding Soviet military thought and doctrine. Both writers come to similar conclusions that such analyses reach inferences that reflect the analyst's own preferences regarding U.S. and Western strategic choices. Raymond Carthoff presents the situation from the other side of the hill viz. how Moscow's view of Western military thought and doctrine is affected by its own policy preferences. Douglas Hart and Barry Blechman describe how Western incomprehension and misreading of Soviet military doctrine have tended to overemphasize doctrinal asymmetries which has adversely affected arms control negotiations. Finally, Lawrence Martin argues that Western understanding of Soviet military doctrine has influenced its force posture planning.

It could be argued with justification that these studies are somewhat dated in the light of the cataclysmic changes wrought in the international system by Gorbachev's unceasing peace offensive. Also, that the nature of these studies in quite arcane. Nuclear weapons, on which the Central Strategic Balance between the superpowers is based, however, inscribe a logic of their own. With the establishment of nuclear parity questions such as nuclear superiority, assured destruction, nuclear equivalence, nuclear sufficiency and so on become extremely relevant for the preservation of stability and the atomic peace. These are questions that should interest all students of international relations and national security, and there are many lessons in these essays for the protagonists and antagonists of the Bomb in the sub-continent.

P.R. Chari is a former director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

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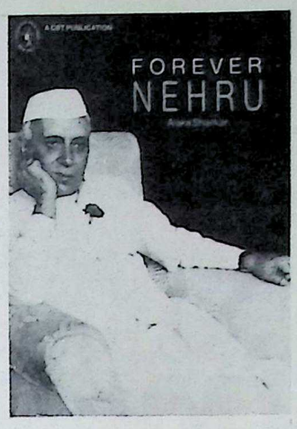
Potted Biographies for the Young

Anita Kohli



REMEMBERING OUR LEADERS
Children's Book Trust, 1989, pp. 24, Rs. 25.00

FOREVER NEHRU
By Alaka Shankar
Children's Book Trust, 1989, pp. 144, Rs. 17.00

THUS SPOKE JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: INDIA AND THE WORLD
Children's Book Trust, 1989, pp. 128, Rs. 15.00

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: YEARS OF STRUGGLE
Compiled by Arjun Dev
National Book Trust, 1989, pp. 329 Rs. 37.00

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
By Tara Ali Baig
National Book Trust, 1989, Rs. 8.50

The summer vacations are here and while the sun beats down outside, there is time for children to catch up on some reading removed from the heavy school bags that during the school year leave no time for indulgences.

With the freedom movement having blurred in the memory after 43 years of freedom, even grandparents barely remember stories of nationalist heroes to tell their grandchildren. Even the name Gandhi can be a confusing one and Rajendra Prasad, Subramania Bharati, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Vallabbhai Patel, Lala Lajpat Rai, etc. are only static images from the pages of history books or statues in public parks.

In an attempt to remedy this the Children's Book Trust has brought out two series of profiles of the great men and women who helped India's awakening. Each set contains eight short biographies. One contains biographies of 16 pages each of Bankim Chandra, Annie Besant, Bhikhaiji Cama, Sarojini Naidu, Abul Kalam Azad, C.V.Raman, Kamala Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The other set contains 24 page biographies of Lokmanya Tilak, Annasaheb Karve, Visvesvarayya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sri Aurobindo, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabbhai Patel and Subramania Bharati. Each short biography has been written by a different writer, but the editing and subtitling has ensured a uniformity of length and presentation.

One had hoped that these biographies would have a presentation more palatable and inspiring for children than the sketches one finds in standard history books but this does not seem to be the case. Trite phrases like "one of the greatest sons of mother India" (Lajpat Rai), "on August 1, 1920 Lokmanya breathed his last", "It was a token of gratitude to a son of its soil who had followed the call of his soul to serve his motherland" (Rajendra Prasad) abound and most of them read like a chronology of historical events in lives of plaster saints. The books merely reflect our own attitude to our leaders. Deify them, so that you can hang their pictures on your walls and garland them. If you allowed them to remain human, then the question would automatically arise: If they could do it why can't you! Putting them way above you creates a gap that is happily left unbridged.

There is also an attempt by CBT in this set of books to ensure that all parts of India and religion find adequate representation, though it might have been a good idea to have included a Sikh nationalist as well.

The most interestingly written biography is that of Bankim Chandra by Shukhamoy Bhattacharjee. It is presented through a series of anecdotes, in a conversational style, easy to read and striking the right chord. Even though Bankim Chandra also 'breathed his last' and we pay 'silent homage too this great man', in the context of the rest of the text the triteness melts and the words assume their real meaning.

In an age where children have become disillusioned early about the nation's leaders and where the virtues of sacrifice, hardwork, simplicity and patriotism are merely catchwords confined within the covers of a dictionary, *Remembering Our Leaders* takes a new meaning. One only wishes the books spoke more from the heart so that they could touch and inspire rather that serve as mere reminders.

The Nehru Birth Centenary celebrations brought Nehru back into sharp focus. His charm, his dedication and his deep and abiding love for the Indian people and Indian children blew like a soothing breeze reassuring and healing. There was a revival of interest in his life and thoughts reflected in the number of publications that were released. The Children's Book Trust brought out *Forever Nehru* by Alaka Shankar and *Thus Spoke Nehru: India and the World*.

Forever Nehru is an easy to read biography of a man whose only great love was India. The book is interspersed with his writings, his letters and thoughts. It is a very worthwhile book for children as it shows Nehru hitting out at religious bigotry, superstition and exploitation. It shows him as truly secular, a patriot par excellence, a humanist, a democrat and a man with deep pride in his country and its cultural roots. The book also has enough photographs, quotations and remarks on Nehru to make the reader feel that he is getting a true insight into the character of India's first Prime Minister.

Thus Spoke Jawaharlal Nehru: India and the World is a collection of Jawaharlal Nehru's thoughts and writings culled from *The Discovery of India*, Vol. 1-5 of Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches, Jawaharlal Nehru on science and society, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology and India's Foreign Policy*. They attempt to take the child through a journey of India's historical past and cultural inheritance to an understanding of her suffering under the British colonial rule, the awakening that led to the freedom struggle, the ultimate realisation of freedom and then a plan for the future.

What is remarkable about this book is its stress on the importance of a wide world view and the tasks before India after independence. While one third of the book is devoted to our past, two thirds is to our present and future. The book tries to mould the minds of children towards the realisation of an India, closer to the dreams of one of her most committed servants. Shankar's cartoons are a delightful addition.

The National Book Trust has also brought out two interesting books on Nehru. *Jawaharlal Nehru: Years of Struggle* and *Jawaharlal Nehru*. The former is edited by Arjun Dev and the latter written by Tara Ali Baig.

Jawaharlal Nehru: Years of Struggle is an anthology of Nehru's writings. It is the collected thoughts and writings of Nehru on himself, the struggle for freedom, socialism and planning, religion, culture and communal politics, international perspectives and civil liberties. It ends with a letter to his daughter Indira which is so moving in its universality and topicality that it could have been written today. It plumbs the very depths of man emerging from darkness to light and with a ray of hope for the future. Today one needs to have that ray of hope as much as it was needed in those dark days of freedom struggle.

However, this book can be best appreciated by older children. It can give them a direction and a beginning and a sense of deep pride in their country.

Tara Ali Baig's book on Jawaharlal Nehru is a child's delight, full of pictures that speak of the man as eloquently as does the text. The text is brief and gives the essence of the man in the minimum number of words. Reading it is like spending an afternoon with Nehru, and a very pleasant one indeed.

I wonder whether the quality of writings on Nehru are a measure of the man himself or of the Indian people's great and abiding love for a very human, but a very charming and noble man. ❑

Anita Kohli teaches English in a school in Delhi.

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Titles carried in theses columns are of books received during 1989-90

■ ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

The Indian Economy And Its Performance Since Independence—edited by R.A. Choudhury, Shama Gamkar & Aurobindo Ghose. A useful study in a broad perspective of the Indian economy in modern times, this volume looks at the interface of politics and economics as well as of development both the rural and urban, agriculture and industry, development policy and government strategy. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 240.00.

The Indian Population Problem: A Household Economics Approach—Bahnisikha Ghosh. Using a new home economics approach in tandem with other quantitative approaches, Dr. Ghosh examines the relationship between economic and demographic forces in India and focuses on both the inherent conflict and the complementarity between them. Sage Publications, 1990, hardback Rs. 180.00.

Dairy Aid And Development: India's Operation Flood—Martin Doornbos, Frank van Dorsten, Manoshi Mitra & Piet Terhal. This study, which forms a part of the Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives, focusses on the processes of social and economic change which are associated with Operation Flood. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 250.00.

The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: Nanchilnadu 1880–1939—M.S.S. Pandian. Based on a detailed study of one region over a period of sixty years, this major study seeks to overcome the methodological inadequacies of the mode of production debate. Sage Puglications, 1990, Rs. 175.00.

■ HABITAT & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Making of a Metropolis: Planning And Growth of Delhi—A.K. Jain. The subject of the book is urban policy in the national context in terms of housing in urban India and land resources in urban development. The book also goes into the concept of National Capital Region—its contradictions and perspectives. National Book Organization, 1990, Rs. 450.00.

Bombay: Can It House Its Millions—P.S.A. Sundaram. A new approach to solving the housing problems of third world cities by the one time administrator of MHADA, the chief housing management agency of the government of Maharashtra. Clarion Books, 1989, Rs. 190.00.

Of Man And His Settlement—M.N. Buch. The author addresses himself to the problems relating to the settlements of men in an urban context, the environment in which he lives and the administrative systems which he has evolved to manage his affairs. Sanchar Publishing House, forthcoming.

■ POLITICS & HISTORICAL STUDIES

Sati: Historical And Phenomenological Essays—Arvind Sharma with Ajit Ray, Alaka Hejib & Katherine K. Young. This study brings to bear methodological sophistication to the phenomenon of Sati in all its dramatic and tragic element. Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, Rs. 45.00 (paper).

The Dust In The Balance: British Women In India—1905–1945—Pat Barr. This is not yet another stereotype of the *Memsahibs* but the story of the British women who tried to understand the complex realities of India. Hamish Hamilton, 1989, distributed by Rupa & Co., Rs. 425.00.

Babri Masjid—Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy—Asgar Ali Engineer. A timely study by a truly secular scholar of Islamic studies. Ajanta Publications, 1989, Rs. 175.00.

My Peking Memoirs Of The Chinese Invasion Of India—Purnendu Kumar Banerjee. New light by India's envoy to China on those critical years of our history. Clarion Books, 1990, Rs. 145.00.

French Studies In History-Vol.II—The Departures—Maurice Aymard & Harbans Mukhia. Together with the first volume of this anthology, *The Inheritance*, this volume traces the growth of an important perspective on the study of history. Orient Longman, 1990, Rs. 105.00.

Techniques To Technology: A French Historiography Of Technology—edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya & Pietro Redondi. The papers in this volume sum up the debate on the nature of the history of technology which evolved in French thought in our century. Orient Longman, 1990, price not stated.

■ SOCIOLOGY

Studies in Social Movements—T.K. Oommen. Lucid and clear in style, interdisciplinary in orientation, this book is an analysis of hitherto neglected themes in movement studies. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs.235.00 (hardback).

■ RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Scientific Foundations Of Jainism—K.V. Mardia. This volume forms part of the Lala S. T. Jain Research series and attempts to decidate the point that Jainism is a science with religion. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, Rs.140.00.

Ganadharavada: The Essentials Of Bhagavan Mahavir's Philosophy—Acharya Vijay Bhuvanbhanusri. Seeks to portray the resolution of doubts posed by eleven scholars to Mahavir. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1989, Rs.70.00 (paper), Rs. 125.000 (cloth)

The Mechanics Of G.O.D.:A Theory On The Transition of Species And Events—Thomas Easley. It examines the practicality of our having a better understanding of metaphysics and the reality of the psychological drama being acted out in man's psyche by forces and laws which are both known and unknown. Garutman Books, Allied Publishers, 1990, Rs. 175.00.

Philosophy And Religion: Essays In Interpretation—J.L. Mehta. A seminal collection of papers which highlights the richness of Indian thought in which philosophy, religion and poetry interfuse. Published by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research in association with Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1990, Rs. 175.00.

■ EDUCATION

The Dividends Of Learning: World Bank Support For Education. A booklet prepared by the Population and Human Resources Department, Education and Employment Division Of the World Bank. February 1990.

■ PSYCHOLOGY

Applied Social Psychology In India—edited by Girishwar Misra. This volume provides comprehensive analyses of research on deprivation, poverty, competence, population, political behaviour, achievement motivation, social tension, multilingualism, marginality of weaker sections, as also conceptualizations of endogeneous development. Sage Publications, 1990, Hardback Rs.195.00.

■ LITERATURE & FICTION

The Buddha Of Suburbia—Hanif Kureshi. The novel is a perceptive account of England's bitter class struggles. With savage satire, Kureshi portrays both the indigenous British and the immigrants and their offspring. Faber & Faber, 1989, Rs. 150.00 (Indian price).

Hero: A Fable—I. Allan Sealey. The themes are the two major Indian obsessions—films and politics. Viking, 1989, Rs. 125.00.

Snake And Other Stories—Premendra Mehta. Translated by Rina & Pritish Nandy. A collection of twelve Bengali short stories translated into English. Seagull Books, 1989, Rs. 100.00.

The Fig Tree—Aubrey Menon. The theme centres around a scientist Harry Wesley whose gravity of demeamour and equally compelling desire to have a statue erected in his honour spur him to invent an oral contraceptive. Penguin (India), 1989, Rs. 50.00.

A Summons To Memphis—Peter Taylor. The book has been awarded the Ritz Hemingway award and the Pulitzer prize. The novel treats in a comically ironic way the internal conflicts of its central character who is torn between memories of his childhood spent in Nashville, then Memphis and his present life in New York. Penguin, London, 1989, £4.99.

Mrityunjaya: The Death Conqueror—Shivaji Sawant. Translated from Marathi by P. Lal & Nandini Nopaney, this is a fictionalized version of the life of Karna, the great hero of the Mahabharat War. Writers Workshop, 1989, Rs. 400.00.

We Have Arrived In Amritsar And Other Stories—Bhisham Sahni. Translated by Jai Ratan. This collection of short stories tells of the horrors of partition, life in Delhi's slums and suburbs, of monks, thieves and migrant-women, with an honesty, a simplicity of expression and the deep compassion of a secular mind. Disha Books, Orient Longman, 1990, Rs. 60.00.

Trying To Grow—Firdaus Kanga. Built around the experience of a physically handicapped boy turning into manhood, this is a deeply-moving work with a remarkable blend of directness, humour and irreverence. Ravi Dayal Publisher, Delhi, 1990, Rs. 95.00.

Alien Heart—K.S. Duggal. Translation by Jai Ratan of the author's classic Punjabi novel *Man Pardesi* about a family of nationalist Muslims in the years following Partition. Disha Books, Orient Longman, 1990, Rs.40.00.

Looking Back—Sanjiv Bhatla. A first book of poems by one who is an engineer by training. Disha Books, Orient Longman, 1990, Rs. 25.00.

India, Mystic, Complex And Real—An Interpretation Of E.M. Forster's A Passage To India—Adwaita P. Ganguly. Foreword by John Beer. A multi-dimensional study of a twentieth-century classic. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1990, Rs. 300.00.

■ INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

India And The World—V.P. Dutt, A study by a former pro-vice chancellor of Delhi University, a former MP and the author of *China's Foreign Policy*, *China and the World*, *India's Foreign Policy*, which underscores the relevance and validity of the Nehruvian foreign policy framework in the present-day world. Sanchar Publishing House, 1990, Rs.140.00.

■ ART & CULTURE

Mahishasuramardini In Indian Art—Shanti Lal Nagar. This well-illustrated books stimulates many lines of useful enquiry about the goddess in her many-splendoured forms. Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 1989, Rs. 450.00.

Muslims In India—edited by Ratna Sahai. A beautifully designed hand-book on the history, culture and socio-economic background of Muslims in India. Produced for the Ministry of External Affairs by Format, 1990, Rs. 150.00

■ GENERAL

The Big Train Ride—Eric Newky. A detailed description of how the trans-Siberian railway came to be built interspersed with irreverent jibes at the Soviet bureaucracy. Picador, 1989, £4.99.

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B.G. Kher: The Gentleman Premier—M.V. Kamath. Kamath draws a fascinating portrait of B.G. Kher as a freedom fighter, a humanist, a Gandhian and a gentleman to his finger tips. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1989, Rs. 200.00.

Audit In India's Democracy—Y. Krishnan. Yuvraj Krishnan, a retired deputy-comptroller and auditor-general has dealt with the importance of audit for the healthy functioning of democracy. Clarion Books, 1989, Rs. 160.00.

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Drugs: The Evil Addiction—Beena Menon; *Aids: Humanity's Gravest Challenge*—Dr. Pushpa Khurana. Both published by Clarion Books, 1990, Rs.120.00.

The above-mentioned volumes from Clarion Books form part of the *Public Concerns* series, editor, Mahendra Kulasreshtha.

Festivals Fairs And Fasts Of India—Shakti M. Gupta. A lavishly illustrated work that describes festivals of all eight religions practised in India. Clarion Books, 1990, Rs.58.00.

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■ BIOGRAPHY

Henry James: A Life—Leon Edel. The book condenses the author's earlier monumental biography into a more sharply-focussed, easier-to-read edition, which retains all the richness of James' life. Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 1989, Rs.110.00.

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Judith Brown is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Manchester.

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Francis Dore has had a career both as a diplomat and as an academic.
Marie-Laure Prevost is curator at the Department of Manuscripts, National Library of Paris.

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Michael Adas is Professor of History at Rutgers University.

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This is a collection of papers, written over the period 1956 to 1986, on the growth experience in agriculture in India and related issues. Three of the papers are in the nature of a comparative analysis of growth experience in Mexico, Taiwan, and mainland China, and more generally of the mobolization of the rural economy in East Asia. Two of them are devoted wholly to a detailed analysis of ownership and distribution of land in India in the mid-1950s, and the case for redistribution; another to some hypotheses concerning interest rates and the distribution of credit in the rural sector. Two papers deal with the size and pattern of livestock holdings in India, with particular reference to questions concerning 'sacred cows' and 'surplus cattle'. The problems of mechanization of agriculture and its effects on output and employment are examined in another paper covering India as well as Sri Lanka on the basis of data relating to the 1960s and early 1970s. There are also three papers dealing with direct taxation of agriculture in India, the investment potential of idle rural labour, and some issues highlighted by studies of selected villages in Tamil Nadu, covering the period 1919 to 1961.

K. N. Raj, an eminent economist, is Honorary Fellow at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

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Dr Misra is a former Vice-Chancellr of Bhagalpur University, has been a Visiting Smuts Fellow at cambridge, and Professor of History, University of Delhi.

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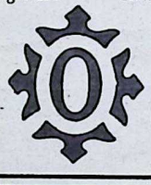

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This book takes up an important aspect of the revolutionary 'renewal' going on in what the authors refer to as the alteration of the Soviet people's 'historical, social memory'. It is this process that the authors choose to term *purification*—the liberation of social consciousness from falsifications and stereotypes. Dogmas and myths are being done away with.

In terma of composition, the chapters in the book can be divided into three parts. The introduction reflects the authors' thoughts on separate aspects of scientific and mass historical consciousness, which should put the material in perspective for the reader. The next subject cycle is dedicated to a discussion of political history in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s and the complex process of democratisation in the country's socio-political life starting from the 20th Congress until perestroika. Finally, the conclusion deals with contemporary problems—the authors examine unrealized alternatives for the country's historical development, and the progress of perestroika.

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"Forty-five years' friendship makes it difficult for me to think in terms of Chitta Ranjan in the past tense. Death came to him without warning and without fuss. He left as if he had lifted his pencil in the middle of a paragraph." H.Y. Sharada Prasad.

"We grew up like brothers. For thirty years, Chitta Ranjan and I remained so. Rarely does one come across a person of such total integrity. And he was so totally unpretentious. Often I used to tease him—how can you be sure the meek shall inherit the earth? And promptly would come his response: Who else can?" Nikhil Chakravarthy.

It is with a deep sense of sorrow that *The Book Review* family records the passing away of C.N. Chitta Ranjan, who among his many preoccupations adorned the editorial board of the journal between 1978 and 1985.

My own association with Chitta Ranjan dates back twelve years, from the time *The Book Review* passed under the umbrella of Nikhil Chakravartty's Perspective Publications. As his trusted colleague and effective right hand man, much of the task of guiding the fledgling journal through its infant struggles fell on Chitta Ranjan.

There could be no better training ground for someone trying to learn to write than to be overseen by two greats like NC and CNC (as Chitta Ranjan was popularly known). Morning editorial sessions were invariably stimulating; ideas flowed rich and fast, peppered by trenchant criticisms, flavoured by arguments and quick repartee in which neither would ever concede the last word to the other. Yet the exchanges soared to intellectual heights wholly unsullied by rancour or malice. Chitta Ranjan had a sense of humour which would often find him laughing like a teenager at a good joke.

Chitta Ranjan's integrity which was an article of faith with him, his unswerving, uncompromising commitment to his beliefs and principles, his deep sense of dedication to the cause of the downtrodden, have all been well documented by many who had the good fortune to work with him or could lay claim to his friendship over long periods of time. The outstanding journalist that he was, Chitta Ranjan imparted his wisdom and experience without a trace of impatience even to a novice. He did not need to don the mantle of pomposity to impress. He never made any pretence of hiding his utter contempt for the journalistic "I" which so many inflated egos in his world cannot shake off.

Above all, what he managed to demonstrate, by simply living the values that he believed in, was that an ideal never need remain impossible to attain. He once related how he returned an honorarium for an article he wrote because he felt it was excessive for the amount of labour involved!

Chitta Ranjan is no more and many of us will grieve for all the days and years to come for the loss of a dearly valued guide, mentor and friend.

C.C.

C.N. Chitta Ranjan, who breathed his last in the night of August 2, 1990 in Delhi, was born in Ooty on September 29, 1921. He joined the student movement connected with the battle for freedom at the age of seven and was imprisoned for participating in the 'Quit India' struggle. He began his career with the Indian Express in Madras in the forties. Later he moved to Delhi and joined The Hindustan Times in 1960. When Mainstream was launched in September 1962 he became its founder editor. In 1963 he joined Patriot as its assistant editor and also became editor of Link before leaving Link House in 1970. Thereafter he was resident editor of the National Herald in Lucknow and in 1976 he became the editor of that daily. At the time of his death he was joint editor of India Press Agency (IPA).

He came in close touch with Kamaraj and R. Venkataraman in the days of the freedom struggle. He helped R. Venkataraman, a member of the First Wage Board for Journalists, with considerable intellectual input in placing before the Board the journalists' legitimate demands.

He was associated with the employees unions of the Indian Express, The Hindustan, Patriot, as well as the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ), the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Madras Union of Journalists.

CNC, as he was known to all, is survived by his wife and three daughters.

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Francis Dore has had a career both as a diplomat and as an academic.
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JULY - AUGUST 1990

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Chitta Ranjan Remembered

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"Forty-five years' friendship makes it difficult for me to think in terms of Chitta Ranjan in the past tense. Death came to him without warning and without fuss. He left as if he had lifted his pencil in the middle of a paragraph." H.Y. Sharada Prasad.

"We grew up like brothers. For thirty years, Chitta Ranjan and I remained so. Rarely does one come across a person of such total integrity. And he was so totally unpretentious. Often I used to tease him—how can you be sure the meek shall inherit the earth? And promptly would come his response: Who else can?" Nikhil Chakravarthy.

It is with a deep sense of sorrow that *The Book Review* family records the passing away of C.N. Chitta Ranjan, who among his many preoccupations adorned the editorial board of the journal between 1978 and 1985.

My own association with Chitta Ranjan dates back twelve years, from the time *The Book Review* passed under the umbrella of Nikhil Chakravartty's Perspective Publications. As his trusted colleague and effective right hand man, much of the task of guiding the fledgling journal through its infant struggles fell on Chitta Ranjan.

There could be no better training ground for someone trying to learn to write than to be overseen by two greats like NC and CNC (as Chitta Ranjan was popularly known). Morning editorial sessions were invariably stimulating; ideas flowed rich and fast, peppered by trenchant criticisms, flavoured by arguments and quick repartee in which neither would ever concede the last word to the other. Yet the exchanges soared to intellectual heights wholly unsullied by rancour or malice. Chitta Ranjan had a sense of humour which would often find him laughing like a teenager at a good joke.

Chitta Ranjan's integrity which was an article of faith with him, his unswerving, uncompromising commitment to his beliefs and principles, his deep sense of dedication to the cause of the downtrodden, have all been well documented by many who had the good fortune to work with him or could lay claim to his friendship over long periods of time. The outstanding journalist that he was, Chitta Ranjan imparted his wisdom and experience without a trace of impatience even to a novice. He did not need to don the mantle of pomposity to impress. He never made any pretence of hiding his utter contempt for the journalistic "I" which so many inflated egos in his world cannot shake off.

Above all, what he managed to demonstrate, by simply living the values that he believed in, was that an ideal never need remain impossible to attain. He once related how he returned an honorarium for an article he wrote because he felt it was excessive for the amount of labour involved!

Chitta Ranjan is no more and many of us will grieve for all the days and years to come for the loss of a dearly valued guide, mentor and friend.

C.C.

C.N. Chitta Ranjan, who breathed his last in the night of August 2, 1990 in Delhi, was born in Ooty on September 29, 1921. He joined the student movement connected with the battle for freedom at the age of seven and was imprisoned for participating in the 'Quit India' struggle. He began his career with the Indian Express in Madras in the forties. Later he moved to Delhi and joined The Hindustan Times in 1960. When Mainstream was launched in September 1962 he became its founder editor. In 1963 he joined Patriot as its assistant editor and also became editor of Link before leaving Link House in 1970. Thereafter he was resident editor of the National Herald in Lucknow and in 1976 he became the editor of that daily. At the time of his death he was joint editor of India Press Agency (IPA).

He came in close touch with Kamaraj and R. Venkataraman in the days of the freedom struggle. He helped R. Venkataraman, a member of the First Wage Board for Journalists, with considerable intellectual input in placing before the Board the journalists' legitimate demands.

He was associated with the employees unions of the Indian Express, The Hindustan, Patriot, as well as the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ), the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Madras Union of Journalists.

CNC, as he was known to all, is survived by his wife and three daughters.

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An Irrepressible Optimist

S. GOPAL

GANDHI: PRISONER OF HOPE

By Judith M. Brown

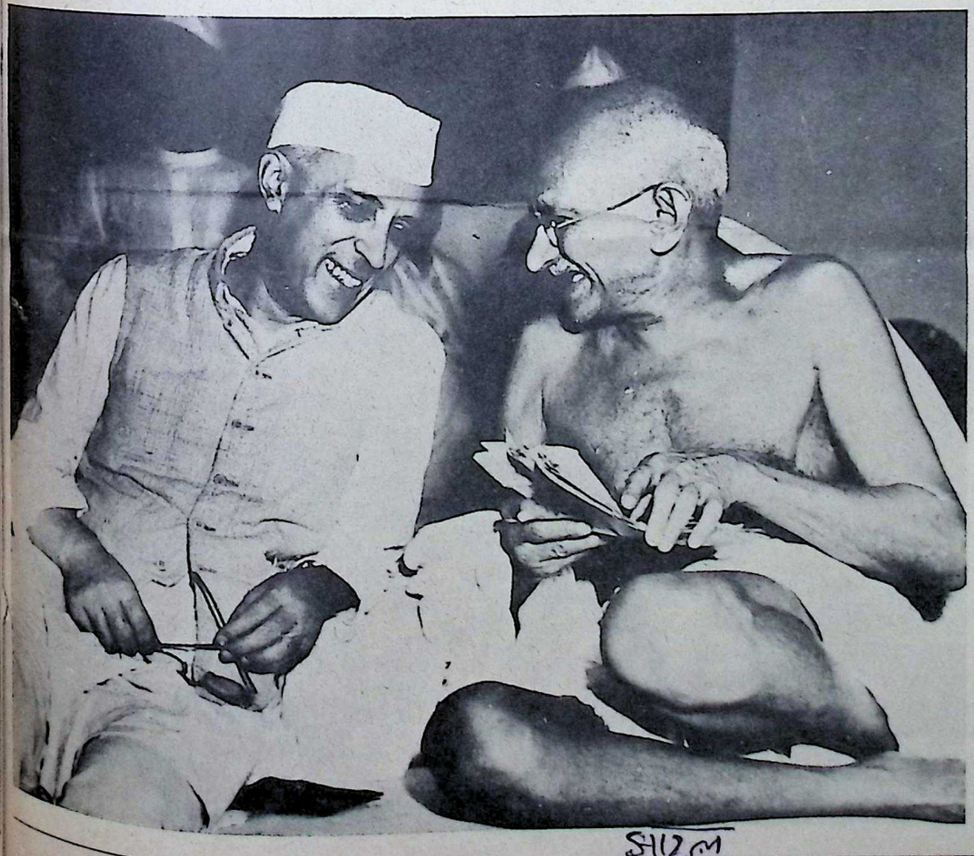
Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 441, Rs. 275.00

As the world staggers into the last decade of the twentieth century, it becomes increasingly clear that Gandhi was the greatest personality of these hundred years. He took an interest in almost every aspect of human activity and all his efforts were for the good of humanity. During the freedom movement, he puzzled and exasperated many of his British adversaries. It was not only Winston Churchill who denounced him; Linlithgow, the heavy-handed Viceroy of the war years, described him as "the world's most successful humbug", an opinion shared by Willingdon before and Wavell after. To the military mind of Chetwode, commander-in-chief in the early thirties, baffled by Gandhi's non-violent methods of warfare, he was "as cunning as a cartload of monkeys." But even at that time to those outside the fray between India and Britain the message of Gandhi to all men and women everywhere could not be hidden. Contemporaneous with the vituperation of British proconsuls came the ultimate accolade of jazz; and Cole Porter immortalized him in one of his best-known lyrics:

You are the top; you are Mahatma Gandhi,
You are the top; you are Napoleon brandy.

Nor has the glaring light of hindsight since his death in 1948 harmed Gandhi's reputation; indeed with the passage of time his fame has increased and his name has become a household word in every part of the world. The white American singer, Joan Baez, in her autobiography published in 1966, reports a dialogue between her husband and their daughter aged eleven:

"Did Gandhi have a penis?" she asked.
"Yes", he answered.
"Did he have a vagina too?
"No," said Ira. "He was a man, and men just have a penis."
"Well", she said, pausing in the doorway," it's just that he was so nice. . . I thought he might have had both."



In the United States, Gandhi inspired the blacks in their struggle for civil rights; and in the Soviet Union today Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the champion of Georgian independence, who has spent the past thirty years in and out of gaol, advocates day-to-day rebellion in terms of civil disobedience. His elaboration of his approach echoes the voice of Gandhi: "I don't see the point of fighting Gorbachev on Gorbachev's terms. I don't see why we should respect his constitution or his laws. They are the laws of empire and empire is dead." Clearly, outside India at least, Gandhi is still very much of a live influence, and all for the good. As George Orwell observed soon after Gandhi died, which other world leader of this century has left such a clean smell?

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that Gandhi is now an industry. Hundreds of popular writers, biographers, scholars and graduate students have written about him. Research, shallow or in depth, of some aspect, major or minor, of Gandhi's life and work goes on incessantly in institutions round the globe. A man of wide interests and multiple achievements, of extraordinary energy and contradictory opinions, he provided, with his dislike of privacy, more material in his 79 years for scrutiny than any other person of his time. The fertile ground of his life has been gone over, ploughed, mined, dug up and assessed in detail and yet there seems no end to what can be discovered, retold and recast. If the Gandhi factories are ever closed down, it will certainly not be in our time.

A biography of Gandhi in a single volume, if it is to be more than a chronological account, would seem then to be a superhuman task, beyond the powers of a syndicate of historians, let alone a single individual. To have read everything written and spoken by Gandhi or about him, to have taken into account all research and analyses concerning him and his variegated efforts and then to provide a comprehensive and rounded interpretation by modern standards of biographical writing—even to state the requirements boggles the mind. Judith Brown handles the problem by making her own

S. Gopal is Emeritus Professor of Contemporary History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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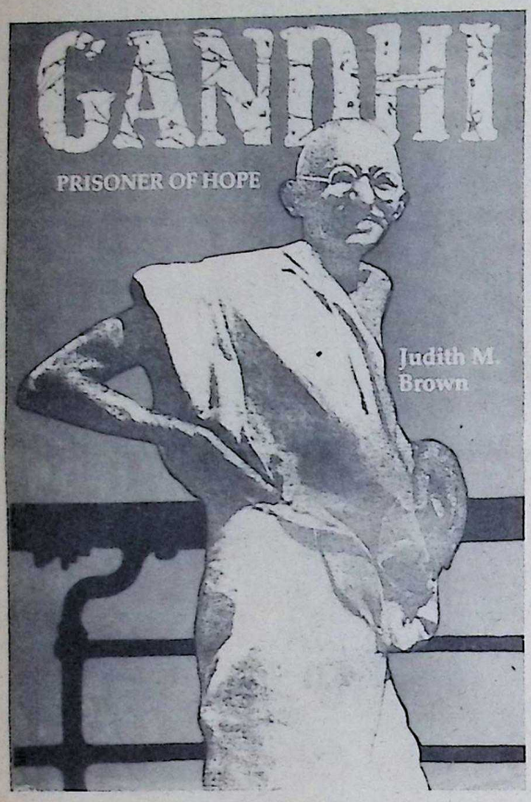

Gandhi was no plaster saint, Nor did he find lasting and real solutions to many of the problems he encountered. Possibly he did not even see the implications of some of them. He was a man of his time and place, with a particular philosophical and religious background, facing a specific political and social situation. He was also deeply human, capable of heights and depths of sensation and vision, of great enlightenment and dire doubt, and the roots of his attitudes and actions were deep and tangled, as are most people's. He made good and bad choices. He hurt some, yet consoled and sustained many. He was caught in compromises inevitable in public life. But fundamentally he was a man of vision and action, who asked many of the profoundest questions that face humankind as it struggles to live in community. It was this confrontation out of a real humanity which marks his true stature and which makes his struggles and glimpses of truth of enduring significance. As a man of his time who asked the deepest questions, even though he could not answer them, he became a man for all times and all places.

From Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope

way through the thickets. A professional historian who is aware of all the writings about Gandhi and herself the author of two earlier studies which examined in detail Gandhi's success in building up a political following in India, she sticks to Gandhi's writings, large enough in themselves, and her own knowledge, supplemented by consultation of the relevant official records and private paper collections. The book has no bibliography; the suggestions for further reading are very general; the notes provide a little more information but by no means give an idea of the vast literature centred round Gandhi. This is a blinkered book, but the approach enables the author to keep the task manageable and pushes us much further in our understanding of the subject.

For this method ensures the strength of the book, which is an analysis, on parallel lines, of the emergence and achievement of Gandhi as a public figure and the evolution of his inner life, which in Gandhi's case is so integral a part of his personality. The well-known facts of the early years are stated just enough to establish the growth in self-knowledge and identity and the pages on South Africa delineate the beginnings of commitment to public service, with the corollary of steady distancing from family life as normally understood. Brown stresses how the experience in South Africa contributed to the making of both the public and the inner life of Gandhi in ways which were to reach their full flowering in India. He organized the Indian community to resist unfair laws, worked to unify it and launched a programme for raising its social consciousness. He developed what we would today call a keen sense of public relations, started journals for giving steady expression to his views, and appealed to as wide a public as possible across the world. He cultivated what he later termed the 'art of begging' and gained a reputation as an honest trustee of public funds. Above all, of course, he perfected the technique of satyagraha; non-violent resistance to injustice combined with a willingness to compromise provided basic principles were not damaged.

Alongside was the progress of the pilgrim spirit. Working within the Hindu tradition but open to outside influences, Gandhi came to the position that true religion, as against specific doctrines, was all-encompassing. The truth-seeker must strive for self-purification and find his God in compassion for fellow human beings. This necessarily presumed non-violence for this alone could safeguard the integrity of all involved. Brown rightly puts in this context *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1909. Noting the inadequacy of materialism and of modern civilization which was its product, Gandhi concluded that the ancient civilization of India was the best the world had even seen. This was not xenophobia, a way of bolstering India's wounded self-esteem. Gandhi deplored that Indians also had lost their way and would have to recover these values and transform themselves before they could attain swaraj. Nor were these values solely spiri tual; Gandhi laid emphasis on swadeshi, the righ type of education, and the importance of goo health and a proper diet.

On his return to the wider context of India, th three strands of Gandhi's life continue: the grow ing involvement in public affairs, the incessan effort to change Indian men and women and th interest in his own self and conduct. Brown keep hold of all three and follows how they weav together. Champaran and Kaira had this in com mon, that the encounter with the raj was at th level of legitimacy, raising the whole issue o government by consent; and this was to be th base of all later dealings of Gandhi with the British He mobilized the peasantry by teaching them t cast off fear and to exercise their rights as citizens and from 1920, when Gandhi concluded that Brit ish rule in India was Satanic, non-cooperation be came a civic duty. Most Indian readers will b familiar with the details of Gandhi's political lead ership which Brown narrates with summary clar ity, and will be more engrossed in the battle within on which depended the battle without. Spinn ing as a way of reaching out to the poorest Indians and work for Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal o untouchability were the means of generating th strength to acquire swaraj. But all these were also part of his effort to see God face to face; and now Gandhi was asserting not that God was Truth but that Truth was God, and such Truth was best found in the service of humanity.

That Brown does not fall victim to the obvious peril of losing sight of Gandhi's personal evolu tion in the crowded complex of events is demon strated by the fact that she deals with the clash with Subhas Bose in about six lines, but devotes much attention to the individual civil disobedi ence of 1940, to which most students of politica history attach little importance. For this was a carefully circumscribed campaign with limited objectives and planned and controlled by Gandh from start to finish. Even if of little significance in the national movement—the *Statesman* of Calcutt reported it daily under the caption 'Cranks Cor ner'—it was a test-tube experiment in Gandhism and therefore earns careful analysis in a biogra phy. But with the failure of the Cripps Mission and the Japanese advance Gandhi had to take mor urgent decisions. The Quit India resolution wa the decision of a leader with unflinching faith in nonviolence accepting the risk of violence in orde to end the calamity of slavery. The remainder o Gandhi's life has been gone over repeatedly by many and the tracks are well-worn.

Judith Brown is a charitable writer and deflate criticism even when it is unavoidable. Of the in equities of imperialism she is well aware, but of th deliberate efforts, for instance, by the British t foster and take advantage of differences betwee Hindus and Muslims all that she says are two

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passing references to the British tendency to see Indian groups in terms of community and to their understanding of Indian society as a plural one of different peoples who needed special outlets in political life. On Gandhi too, while she steers clear of uncritical adulation, she does not consider seriously the various criticisms made of his leadership. Of the suggestion that Gandhi's style and idiom and his support of the Khilafat movement on the basis of Hindu-Muslim partnership rather than an overall Indian identity strengthened communal tendencies, she mentions the view but does not rebut or analyse it. She writes of Gandhi's "moral economics" and states that the industrialists saw in it the promise of harmony and productivity rather than conflict. Surely it should be added that they also saw in it a way of strengthening their own position against that of the workers. It is true that Gandhi was far more concerned with changing people rather than reforming the economic order; but his philosophy assisted the landlords and the capitalists in maintaining their vested interests. Brown does not mention that in 1921 and again in 1931, in terms of peasant unrest in what was then the United Provinces, Gandhi, while prepared to consider at some stage suspension of payment of taxes to the Government, refused to approve non-payment of all rents to the landlords.

> *A biography of Gandhi in a single volume, ... would seem to be a superhuman task, beyond the powers of a syndicate of historians, let alone a single individual. To have read everything written and spoken by Gandhi or about him, to have taken into account all research and analyses concerning him . . . and then to provide a comprehensive and rounded interpretation by modern standards of biographical writing . . . . Judith Brown handles the problem by making her own way through the thickets.*

This was in tune with his lofty notion that no section of society should benefit at the expense of any other, but the immediate effect was to assist the rich against the poor.

What lifts this book above the ordinary level is the author's empathy with her subject. She clearly has in mind the non-Indian reader and, touching on every aspect of Gandhi's multiple activities and meshing closely the public and the personal themes, she seeks to establish that his efforts in so many directions make him a person for all times and places. The sub-title of the book is taken from a passage in the Old Testament, "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope"; and the quotation is apt, for what sustained Gandhi through all the ups and downs of a long life was his hope grounded in religious conviction. To us in India, looking round us, Gandhi's plan to construct a new Indian polity and society infused with nonviolence and godliness by transforming the nature of the human being seems very remote indeed. But Gandhi himself, however dark the horizon, was convinced of the ultimate success of truth. He was, as he often said, an irrepressible optimist; and it is that optimism that we now need most. Whether, without the sense of promise of the Nehru years and without, for many of us, Gandhi's religious faith, such optimism is possible, is the question. ❑

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We reproduce here the last review written by C.N. Chitta Ranjan for The Book Review. —Editor

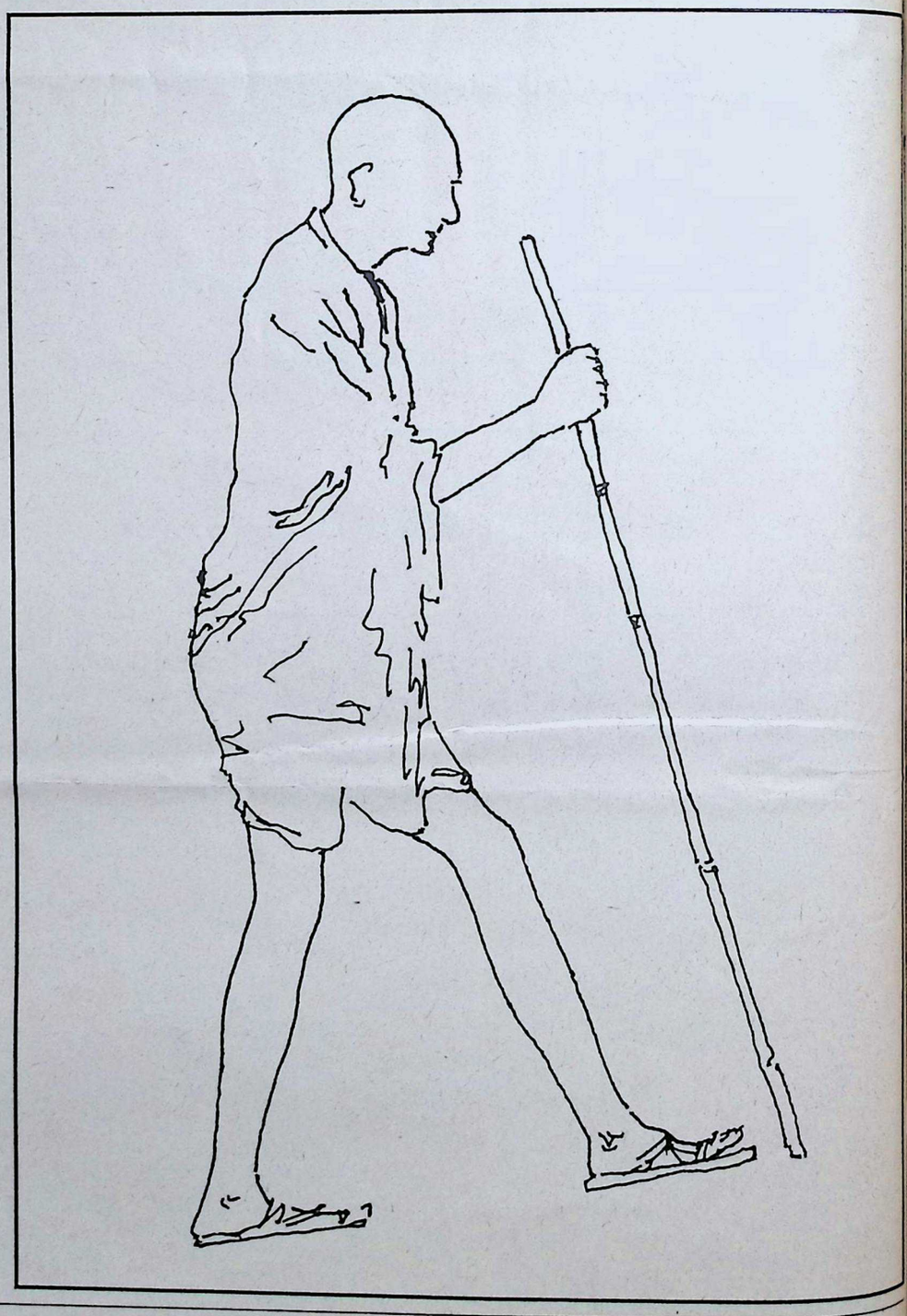
A Vast Canvas

C.N. Chitta Ranjan

THE MORAL AND POLITICAL WRITINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI:
Vol. II: Truth and Non-violence
Vol. III: Non-violent Resistance and Social Transformation

Edited by Raghavan Iyer

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986 & 1987, pp xxii+678 & pp xx+641, Rs. 225.00 & Rs. 250.00



About five months before his martyrdom, Mahatma Gandhi gave us in a short setence a key to an understanding of his complex personality and of his place in human history; he told the Shanti Seva Dal, "My life is my message." Nothing more needs to be said. It is appropriate that Raghavan Iyer, editor of the three-volume selections from Gandhiji's Moral and Political Writings should have placed this five-word "message" at the end of the final volume, summing up not merely the preceding almost two thousand pages but very much more that obviously could not be included in Gandhiji's own words or in the words of others competent to assess one or other aspect of a significant active life spanning half a century, inspiring millions in India and elsewhere and giving direction and purpose to mankind's thoughts and actions on the individual and the collective plane.

In his long life of unceasing activity as teacher of the masses, guide of thinkers and activists, leader of men, fighter in the cause of justice, equality and peace among peoples and nations, the Mahatma inevitably spoke and wrote a great deal over a long period. From the historic struggles in South Africa to the increasingly powerful mass movements in his own country, culminating in the "Quit India" struggle against British imperialism, from the striving for unification of all segments of our populatiuon to the final great effort to heal the wounds inflicted on the nation by Partition which broke his own heart–the whole saga of epic pro-

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portions can hardly be grasped fully through mere words, even if the words are Gandhiji's own. Even so, his own words are the most–and perhaps the only–authentic record of the evolution of his ideas as the basis for action that changed India's history and to a little lesser extent human history. Hence the significance of the volumes under review. The three volumes are the product of painstaking study, sifting, selection and arrangement: what they offer is a coherent picture of the evolution of the man and his mission, a guide for those seeking a path out of the confusion that prevails in India and in the world.

Of course much of the material Iyer presents–or at any rate the line of thinking on both eternal values and contemporary problems of man and society–is familiar to students of Gandhi's approach to human life in its many aspects. Several of the unabridged letters, certainly valuable, have meant also much repetition of ideas; but they perhaps also help us understand the gentle evolution of the Mahatma's ideas and the inner continuity amidst seeming outward contradictions, as in the case of *varna ashrama* on the one hand and equality of all sections of people in the eyes of God on the other. The point is to be noted because of the experience in recent years of Gandhiji being quoted selectively to promote obscurantist and reactionary ideas and the general tendency to ignore the man's basic ideas on self-reliance, decentralization, democracy at the grass-roots, and elimination of poverty. Idolatry has no place in the Mahatma's scheme of things; his Rama or Ramrajya have profound connotations outside the world of those who exploit religion and superstitions and rituals for their own nefarious ends. What he wrote in 1909 thus has a contemporary ring: " 'The name of Rama on the lips, and a dagger under the arm'–that is no faith". As Iyer has put it Gandhiji constantly shattered the hypnotic spell cast by sanctimonious beliefs in collusion with hypocritical practices. Gandhiji's reference to the "inner voice" on crucial occasions has been ridiculed by some, but is 'awakened conscience' totally unrelated to reason? There are many such questions but the essential test is whether a step contemplated or taken is or is not in the interest, at the moral level or the practical level, of human beings individually or collectively or both.

As for non-violence, Gandhiji's belief in it as the only effective weapon against injustice, national and international, against conflicts and exploitation and the like, seems unrealistic in the context of the developing human condition and society. He set before the world an ideal which really flowed out of the great religions, and based his actions, in personal life and in public life, on the principles on which non-violence is based. It is not as if he was not aware of the limitations of his approach, given the internal and external circumstances of the human community. Enough to cite what he said in late 1946, in reply to a question: "Whether non-violence has taken roots in Indian life is still an open question which can only be answered after my death". A look at India in the post-Gandhi years, especially the last two decades, provides some indication of the answer. It is not very encouraging, but amidst violence and hatred there are voices of sanity and acts of courage of the highest order, and these justify Gandhiji's optimism and his faith in humanity. And the Delhi Declaration calling for a nuclear-weapon-free, non-violent world, and the moves towards disarmament, howsoever painfully slow, are pointers to recognition of the continuing validity of the Gandhian path. But no easy path this, scepticism is not without basis.

Gandhiji's struggle against communalism and his constant efforts to break down the artificial barriers between communities, religious, linguistic and other, are surely fresh in public memory. After all he paid the ultimate price for the sake of the unity of India, for the sake of the future generations. Forty years after his fall, that unity is now in greater danger than ever before. The selected pieces and Iyer's summing up in his introduction render elaboration here superfluous.

So far as nation-building is concerned, there is plenty of evidence of Gandhiji's profound thinking and vision. To him, Swaraj was not merely independence from alien rule but also complete economic independence. Democracy at the grass-roots was an article of faith; the concept of village republics, with steadily diminishing centralisation of powers and authority, can be seen as the ultimate in democracy in action. He feared state power, but equally stood firm against unbridled exploitation of man by man. He offered his own scheme of things that should prevail in free India. It covered production and distribution of wealth, elimination of poverty, establishment of human dignity for all equally. And there is vastly more in the great Gandhi legacy. And his relevance? One believes his place in history and his relevance in the future need to be recognised. But then his remarks to a co-worker in May 1947 (who had said, 'You and your ideals have been given the go-by') are worth mentioning: "Who listens to me today? . . .On the eve of independence we are as divided as we were united when we were engaged in freedom's battle. The prospect of power has demoralised us". Now what we have is not the "prospect of power" but the actual acquisition and exercise of power for four decades, with the vast mass of people still far from being involved in nation-building.

Considering the vast canvas, from personal hygiene and diet to universal brotherhood and peace, Raghavan Iyer has done a remarkable job in producing this collection representing the essence of Gandhi. A cheaper edition—in all our languages—should be considered by all concerned with necessary omissions and abridgement. ❑

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Court Chronicles Par Excellence

Harbans Mukhia

SHAH JAHAN NAMA (*an earlier translation by A.R. Fuller completed*)

Edited and introduced by W.E. Begley and Z.A Desai

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp.xxxviii+624, Rs. 575.00

The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan is a work par excellence in the genre of court chronicles of which a large number were compiled during the medieval centuries in India. Indeed, this one is merely an abridgement of the three volume chronicle commissioned by Shah Jahan and put together by Abdul Hamid Lahori and Muhammad Waris under the title *Padshah Nama*, in the process, the highly ornate language of the original has been simplified to bring it within reach of the common intelligence. An English translation of Inayat Khan's work had been prepared by one A.R. Fuller as part of Elliot's project of translating portions of major historical works of the medieval period from Persian into English in the middle of the last century. The full text was, however, never translated before the present one which has completed and updated Fuller's enterprise after nearly a century and a half of lying in the cold.

Medieval Indian court chronicles written in the Persian language have an idiom that is distinctive owing in no small measure to the fact that the historian-compilers were usually courtiers themselves. Sometimes, as in the case of Inayat Khan, they had been associated with the court for more than one generation. This gave them a perspective that was, on one hand rather narrow, and on the other brought them very close to the events they were narrating. Hence the events that interested them were the ones the court was immediately concerned with—accession of rulers, conquests, rebellions, administrative organization etc. etc.—all that until recently used to go in the name of political history. At times as courtiers, and as such being members of one faction or another in the intrigue ridden court, they were themselves participants in those events. It would not therefore have escaped them that the events that constituted the bulk of history for them were caused by the conscious decisions taken by human beings involved in them. It is human volition then that comprised for them causal explanation in history. This is in sharp contrast to the conception of historical causation implied in the medieval European historiographical tradition. The practitioners of this tradition, priests of the church, the only literate class, not only stood at a great distance from the events they narrated, but their very profession imposed on them the perception of history as unfolding of divine will. Divine will as historical causation in turn implied the treatment of history as an integrated whole in which each event had a designated place as part of a pattern, for if history unfolds a divine will, it can not possibly be haphazard. Nothing after all in God's will can be haphazard and whatever events occur, disjointed as they might appear to the human eye, each one has a place in God's grand design constituting the past, the present and the future of the universe.

For medieval Indian historians, on the other hand, history does not unfold a pattern. Each event is a single, individual entity. Even the narrative style of these chronicles reinforces the individuality of events. It is not infrequently that they set out to write a "universal" history. In effect, this is a narrative of the battles and conquests and so on in the regions where 'Islam' had established its rule. Having described the proceedings of that, the historian settles down to narrating the history of various dynasties breaking these down to regional units bringing the narrative up to the current ruler, whose reign is split up into an annual chronicle, the narration of each event is usually prefaced with the words ". . .and among the events of this year was. . ." or ". . .among the occurrences of this year was. . ." or some variation of it, clearly demarcating it from the preceding or the succeeding events. The style and the substance of history-writing thus follow a different logic here than in Europe.

This perspective then, focusing on events centred around the court and explaining them in terms of human volition, at best human nature, has the king as its pivot in view of his position in the court. Thus the events occurring during a reign become a manifestation of his will, his personality, his nature. This lends a fascinating ambivalence to historical explanation. On one hand, the fact that the ruler is a Muslim in a society which is overwhelmingly Hindu imparts a certain acute consciousness of the religious divide particularly when

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On this auspicious day, His Majesty the Refuge of the Caliphate opened his hands for generosity and munificence. He awarded two lakhs of ashrafis and six lakhs of rupees to her Majesty the Queen, Arjumand Bano Begam, entitled Mumtaz Mahal Begam; and ten lakhs of rupees was fixed as the annual allowance for the Queen of the Age; one lakh of ashrafis and four lakhs of rupees were awarded to Her Royal Highness Princess Jahanara Begam, and six lakhs of rupees were assigned as annual allowance for her . . . . . In short, on the auspicious day, a total of 72 lakhs of rupees were bestowed out of which, sixty lakhs of rupees were distributed to the high-ranked Ladies in the seraglio of fortune and to the princess of exalted origion; while twelve lakhs of rupees were given away to the nobles, state officers, sayyids, saints, scholars, pious persons, and poets and others.

From Shah Jahan Nama, *First Year of Shah Jahan's Reign.*

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other divides, such as class or social stratification, were existential, but not conceptual realities. Hence one form of legitimization of the state in terms of Islam is these court chronicles, with the single exception of Abul Fazl's *Akbar Nama*. On the other hand, historical explanation in terms of the ruler's will or nature would bring in many other facets for each ruler would after all possess his own distinctive nature, disposition, strengths and weaknesses.

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Medieval Indian court chronicles written in the Persian language have an idiom that is distinctive owing in no small measure to the fact that the historian-compilers were usually courtiers themselves. Sometimes, as in the case of Inayat Khan, they had been associated with the court for more than one generation. This gave them a perspective that was, on one hand rather narrow, and on the other brought them very close to the events they were narrating.

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The volume under review is an excellent example of this ambivalence. This is a record of the events of the first thirty years of Shah Jahan's reign in the form of an annual chronicle. Shah Jahan is portrayed as a great statesman, conqueror, dispenser of even-handed justice and so forth: but he is also the "Defender of the Faith and King of Islam" [p.18]. Rebellious Muslim nobles are wicked, of course, but rebellious Hindus are "wicked infidels" and imperial army was "the army of Islam" [p. 29]. Such description is a mere format, no doubt; but the very fact that this is a format is not without political significance. For, the underlying assumption in routinely reproducing it could only be that, for the intelligentsia at least. Islam was an accepted point of reference in deriving a part of the state's legitimacy, just as later on Shivaji sought to derive a part of his legitimacy from resurgent Hinduism. And yet the dominant ethos of the medieval Indian state was not theocratic. A good test of this hypothesis would be to look at the Muslim population at the end of the five-and-a-half centuries of "Muslim" rule in India: a mere ten per cent! Clearly, the state did not engage itself in mass scale conversion of non-Muslims to Islam, for it did not seek more than a marginal legitimacy from asserting its "Islamic" character. Fundamentally it sought to obtain acceptance by virtue of establishing law-and-order, by creating a paternalistic ambience through the distribution of patronage and by attaining grandeur of unprecedented dimensions. Almost every page of the *Shah Jahan Nama* recounts events that buttress this kind of structure. Clearly, medieval Indian historiography, as much as medieval Indian history, is far more complex than could be fitted into neat compartments of being "communal" or "secular".

Begley and Desai have rendered an extremely useful service to students of medieval Indian history by translating the whole text of Inayat Khan's work and bringing it uptodate by adding an Epilogue [credited to Begley] which brings the narrative to the close of Shah Jahan's life. They have wisely decided to stick to the style of a literal translation instead of incorporating their own readings into it. And they have certainly done a most competent job of their undertaking. Fidelity, at least in translating narratives perhaps carries a higher virtue than beauty! At any rate the share of beauty has been added in the inclusion of a good number of some of the marvels of Mughal miniatures, often as illustrations of the text, as they were originally intended. There are also photographs of some of the monuments constructed at Shah Jahan's behest.

In sticking to literal translation Begley and Desai might, however, have been better advised to avoid using terms derived from European, particularly, British historical context; they really are most inappropriate and begin to jar. Thus the frequent use of terms like Lord Chamberlain for *Mir-i-Saman*, Lord Chancellor for *Mir Bakhshi*, the Grand Marshal for *Mir Tuzak*, Minister of Royal Works for *Diwan-i-Buyutat*, High Commissioners for *faujdars*, collectors for *Bakhshis* make an absurd reading in a text which is hardly meant to be a best seller and which would presumably be read only by those already considerably familiar with medieval Indian history and its terminology. The absurdity of this kind of forced rendering is brought hilariously into focus when two persons are declared to have "jointly assumed the duties of the Prime Minister" one looking after finance and the other after the administration [p. 546]. Two Prime Ministers in one office of the P.M.!

Foremost among the recipients of the royal favor was Yamin al-Daula Asaf Khan, who in addition to other marks of regard, was invested with the exalted title of Khan Khanan and Sipah-salar (Commander-in-chief). Although that pillar of state had deserved to receive these titles at the time of his majesty's first accession to the throne, yet this illustrious dignity had been conferred instead upon Mahbat Khan, who had ingratiated himself into the royal favour by opportune services during the time that his Majesty was a Prince. As long as Mahabat Khan lived, the Emperor did not think fit to deprive him of the office. But as soon as he was cut off by the ruthless hand of fate, the only obstacle to Yamin al-Daula's preferment was removed and his meritorious claims were thus acknowledged.

From Shah Jahan Nama,
Eighth Regnal Year.

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There is then the occasional use of terms like vassalage [p. 145] and fealty [p. 308] which really are quite alien to the Indian context. Begley and Desai could have at best added a glossary of the administrative terms at the end and stuck to the originals in the text as most modern historians of medieval India tend to do these days. Curiously, in the early pages *mansab* is always followed by rank, so you have frequent statements like "...the holder of 7000—*mansab* rank...." What's really the point when *mansab* itself means rank? Fortunately, the later pages retain only the *mansab* and do without rank.

The production of the book is of a high order as one would expect from OUP; one would also expect a high order of proof-reading from OUP, which unfortunately is not the case with this one. There are far too numerous typographical errors to be overlooked: on pp. 28, 40 [two errors], 144, 152, 261, 284, 303, 310, 314, 395, 447 for example. Would OUP wake up? ❑

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On the Cartographical Path

Narayani Gupta

INDIAN MAPS AND PLANS FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO THE ADVENT OF EUROPEAN SURVEYS

By S. Gole

Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 206 text + 122 illustrations in colour and black & white, index, bibliography, Rs. 900.00

MAPS OF MUGHAL INDIA drawn by Colonel J-P-J Gentil, agent for the French Government to The Court of Shuja-ud-Daula at Faizabad, in 1770

By S. Gole

Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 60, Introduction, bibliography, 21 maps, list of names of sarkars and parganas, Rs. 750.00

Susan Gole, whose "interest in the maps of India dates from a chance visit to a museum on a rainy afternoon" is known to historians and geographers for her catalogue of early Indian maps, *India within the Ganges* (New Delhi, 1983) and the collection of Reproductions, *A Series of Early Printed Maps of India in Facsimile* (New Delhi, 1980). Since then she embarked on a major treasure-hunt, the result of which is the first of the books under review, and in the course of which she came across the manuscript of the atlas which had remained unpublished in the Library at Versailles, and was acquired by the India Office Library in the 1970s, which she proceeded to edit and publish.

For the early Europeans the lovely blue sea around Greece and Italy was the Centre of the World—the Mediterranean—and, Hagars all of them, 'the world was flat/ And that was that,' with the sun and stars quietly circling round it. To Indians in centuries long past, the world was the island of the jamun tree (*Jambu-dvipa*) which constituted a tiny segment of the Middle World (*Madhya-Loka*) which itself was a small section of the universe. Obviously the Europeans looked at the world from one end of a telescope and Indians from the other. And today the Radio-telescopes of the western world are trained on distant regions, seeking to delimit the universe, while the Survey of India is busily mapping roads and lanes in different areas. In the course of two centuries, there has developed a belief in the canonical tradition that the post-Renaissance Europeans were the best map-makers. This has meant that the contribution of the Arabs has been marginalised, and maps found in India have been relegated to the realm of folk-art or, worse, to the back of cupboards in regional archives. It is possible that the time will come when Indian cartographic techniques will be treated with respect. After all, Indian building-techniques and systems of medicine have come to be accepted as viable, even as more practical alternatives to western ones.

Indian building-techniques however are visible; systems of medicine are observable. Cartographic skill is more elusive, maps can remain neglected, misclassified, damaged, anonymous. What a great service, then, has been rendered by Ms. Gole in making this collection. Not very many years ago she had almost concluded that while Arabs, Tibetans, Burmese and Chinese prepared maps, Indians seemed to be devoid of a cartographical 'bump'. But after a patient search through many museums, libraries and archives, across the obstacle-race of indifference and ignorance and with the aid of some enthusiastic and informed individuals, she changed her opinion. When her collection crossed the 200-mark, she decided to pause, and to publish what had been acquired. The attractive reproductions and careful lay-out can make us easily forget the hard work that has gone into it. Many researchers whose 'fieldwork' is conducted in airconditioned libraries could learn the virtues of single-mindedness and perseverance from her. Those who have seen beautiful maps crumbling in archives, and who have been frustrated by the stock reply "you cannot copy it and we have no facilities for making copies" will thank Ms Gole for opening a door which has

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The part of India which has the largest number of maps is Kashmir. Why this should be so is not known, and no reasonable conjecture can be put forward at present. The maps differ widely in style, but most are very detailed and give a fairly accurate depiction. The large cloth map at Jaipur has no text except the title on the back of the map, while the cloth map in the British Library has a name for every village. The former has no roads shown, while the latter is full of them. Yet both are very different from the thirty-three maps in the Tarikh-i-Kala Kashmir. These show every pargana, with emphasis on the rivers and mountains, but no roads, and very few buildings. They belong to a history of Kashmir that was probably written at the request of Mihan Singh, Governor of Kashmir under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the first half of the 19th century.

From Indian Maps and Plans

* * *

In a Mémoire (in manuscript) dated 25 May 1778 that Gentil sent to Paris soon after reaching France in order to secure his pension, he named as one of his achievements 'travailler pour la litterature', since he had collected all the manuscripts he could lay his hands on which might one day aid him in writing a full history of Hindustan, and wrote that the Geography accompanied by twenty-one maps 'ne laissent rien à desirer' (leave nothing to be desired) for the knowledge of this empire, since they were made on the spot according to local geographies. Unfortunately his plans did not mature, as there is no record of his having assembled all his material into a comprehensive history, and we have only the manuscript volumes listed above and the Mémoires published later by his son.

From Maps of Mughal India

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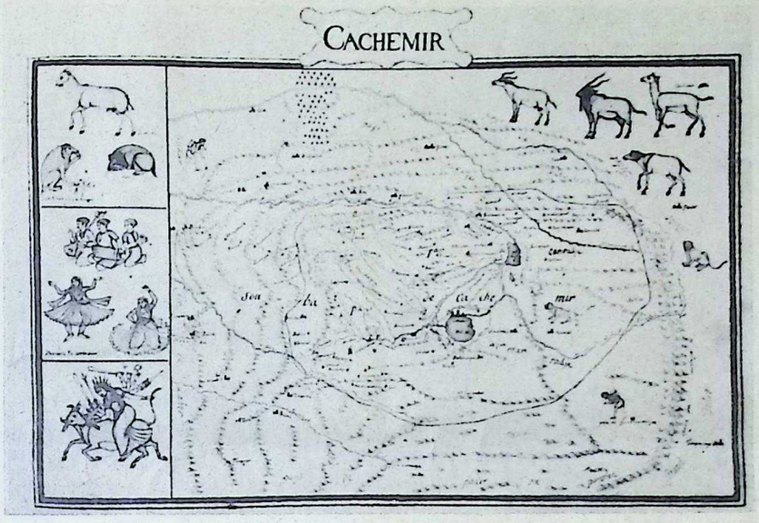
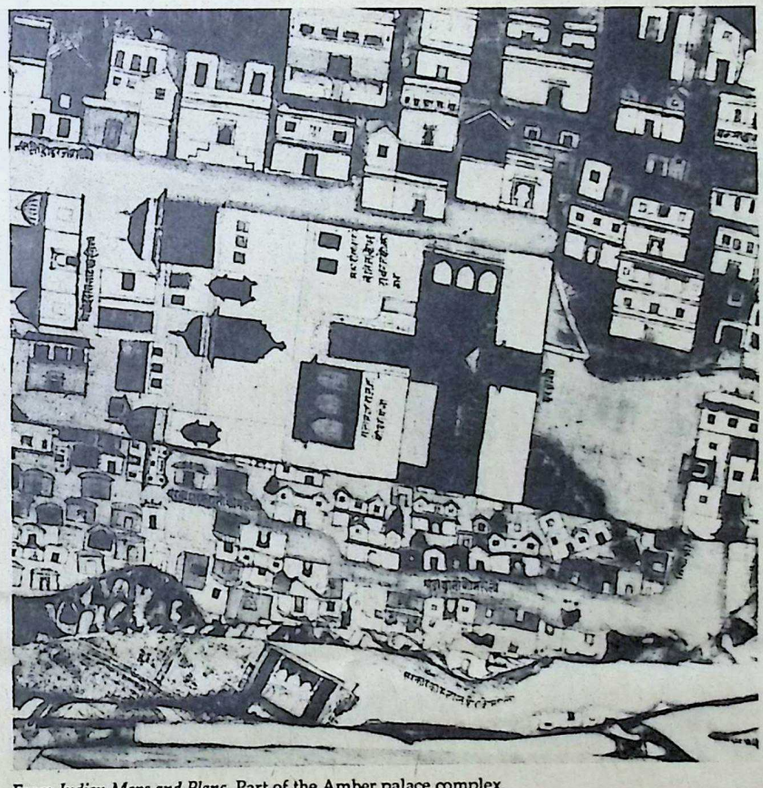
remained shut too long. Hopefully the interest such books will generate could lead to a change in the unnecessarily cautious official policy on the publication of maps.

The respect for things 'put down on paper' is as old as British Rule in India. Clerks in offices asking for applications to be made 'in writing' and on 'plain paper' are echoing an attitude created less than 200 years ago. When British military engineers asked skilled *mistris* to construct buildings of singular dullness from blueprints prepared in England, those *mistris* forgot their own abilities in their deference for these mysterious paper-plans. Likewise with maps. The Survey of India was and is a remarkable enterprise, and has had many dedicated members who worked to make India intelligible to the British. The local inhabitants did not *need* maps because (as many Europeans were quick to remark) Indians had an amazingly clear sense of location and direction. Travellers to India from early times spoke of local guides who knew the terrain perfectly. Even today, town maps are bought by foreigners, seldom by Indians.

This does not mean that Indians did not draw maps. As this book shows, there are many examples of globes and world maps, maps of sacred spaces, topographical and military maps, town plans and construction maps, and sea-charts. Both Emperor Aurangzeb and the Maratha Chiefs who challenged him expected their commanders to send them maps indicating routes taken, forts captured, and territory conquered. Engineers prepared maps when planning a canal network (Ali Mardan's Canal from Karnal to Delhi) or when raising a fort wall (Agra). (The rich collection of maps at Jaipur tempts one to suggest that it could be the location for a national museum of maps and plans). Kashmir seems to have been repeatedly portrayed in maps, the most incredible being the map embroidered on a shawl meant for Ranjit Singh; by the time it was complete—after 37 years!—the Maharaja was no longer there to receive it. Sacred sites and areas were mapped—temples, routes, the circuit—of Vrajbhumi. Jain *munis* invited to spend some time in a particular town were sent attractive pictorial maps of the town. The only maps which were not utilitarian, but were attempts to understand the mysterious universe, were the cosmographics, which in most cases were copied from earlier examples century after century. Sea-charts, world-maps and an unusual map of Central Asia indicate a familiarity with the larger world. Geometric scale is not important in these maps. But there is a scale—that of importance. They are to do with subjects, not areas. Each has a personality, and they are animated, embellished with sketches of people and habitat. There is also a strong quality of individualism, each of them unique. There are maps which are little more than sketches, while others have jewelled perfection of miniatures. Few of them can be dated with precision, but most of those reproduced here were prepared in the 18th and 19th centuries. These are but the tip of the iceberg, and hopefully many more will come to light. Meanwhile, it would be a good idea to make them available to schools. Our children's cartographic and design instincts are stifled by making them use printed "blank maps" which to a young child convey nothing of the wonder that is India.



From *Maps of Mughal India*



From *Indian Maps and Plans*. Part of the Amber palace complex.

I have not read the entry under 'les Indes' in Diderot's *encyclopedia* (which is being reprinted in slim easy to handle volumes) but there is no doubt that the 18th century saw the great French discovery of India. Many officials of the French Compagnie des Indes and commanders of the French forces dreamed of an Indian Empire till as late as the early 19th century. If it had materialised, if Dupleix had won and Clive lost, they would have certainly done all the necessary homework. In a catholic but absorbed fashion, Frenchmen collected 'Indiana'—paintings, coins, manuscripts, handicrafts—all of which went back to France to enrich the Bibliotheque Nationale, the Royal collections and the Musee Guimet. The French Festival in India afforded us some idea of these, but nothing which can be considered comprehensive.

Colonel Gentil (1726-1799) was typical of the French 'adventurers' in India. After serving Dupleix for some years, he spent the eventful decades of the 1760s and 1770s (eventful both in Indian and in European history) as an official French agent at the Court of the Nawab of Awadh. Ousted by the British in 1775, he returned to France, where 'he died in poverty' in 1799, at the precise moment when Napoleon's defeat in Egypt put paid to French dreams of an Indian empire.

Gentil was to the Court of Faizabad what Martin was to be later to the Court of Lucknow. He enjoyed the cultural milieu, he was treated with deference, he could indulge a boundless curiosity by collecting all manner of things, he had translators to help him read Ain-*i*-*Akbari* and translate it, and then to write accounts of India's geography and history. The Indian wars in which the British and French were participants made it useful to have maps of the subcontinent. The French d'Anville prepared one in 1752 and James Rennell, the first Surveyor General of Bengal, published his well-known map in 1782. Gentil's interest in the

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FROM MAGIC TO MEDICINE TO EMPIRE

Kiran Datar

IMPERIAL MEDICINE AND INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES

Edited by David Arnold

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 231, Rs. 190.00

The "new history" has brought about a sea-change in the knowledge, perception and understanding of the past. Thankfully, it has rescued us from the dryness of chronological data, dates and a mere recounting of events. The arena and themes of discourse have widened dramatically, the dramatis personae have changed radically, new actors and new concerns have come centre stage. Professional historians are increasingly involved in uncovering not just fresh evidence but moving into less-trod paths with the rigour of the tools of their craft. Few historians would accept as axiomatic today what one of their colleagues, H.B. Adams, had inscribed on the wall of his seminar room, "History is Past Politics and Politics are Past History". Historians of today have moved far beyond, to take up themes like old age, youth, disease, death and the concept of time. These set of ten essays belong to this genre, exploring as they do, the relationship between disease, medicine and empire, and the theme running through the collection is the interaction of imperialism with disease, medical research and the administration of health policies.

For long, it has been commonplace to talk of some of the benefits of colonial rule—better communication facilities, the setting up of railroads and roads, a better administration, a lingua franca and modern education. It is only of late that many of these benefits are being re-examined, to study both the ideology that shaped colonial rule as well as the impact of these policies on the indigenous societies. Whereas many of the traditional assumptions have been given up, it is still commonplace to unquestioningly accept one of the benefits of colonial rule—modern medicine and its practitioners and the humanitarian motivation propelling their efforts to eradicate tropical killers like cholera, plague and smallpox. In this volume, however, the contributors take a fresh look at this whole question and come up with some interesting insights. Seeking to study the disease and the cure within its social, cultural, political and administrative framework, they explore the ideology of imperial medicine and its implementation and the role it played in the "illusion of empire".

Unlike many edited collections, which are disparate in theme, presentation and interpretation, this collection has a remarkable continuity, so that the different parts fit into an imperial whole. The Imperialist is British or American; what he is combating is insanity, sleeping sickness, smallpox, cholera, plague, influenza, bilharzia and malnutrition, but what is being kept in mind is the "instrumentality" of the disease and the medicine, in what they reveal about the relationship of power and authority between the ruler and ruled.

For many nineteenth and early twentieth century European administrators, European medical intervention in the Colonial world, was in the words of Florence Nightingale, part of a mission to "bring a higher civilisation". Modern historians are pointing out that in fact, many epidemic diseases such as smallpox and measles were spread by European contact. For instance, European trade and contact spread plague from Hong Kong in 1894 to Bombay, Cape Town and Nairobi a decade or so later. White soldiers spread syphilis in India and it was so identified with the white men that it was called *firangi roga*, the foreign disease. The spread and prevalance of disease amongst the indigenous population became a factor re-inforcing racial segregation and fostering a sense of racial superiority (the strong white man as contrasted to the lethargic native). As European empires reached their most expansive and assertive phase (between 1880 and 1930), western medicine also achieved an importance in imperial ideology. The greater numbers of European administrators and their vulnerability to tropical diseases necessitated European medical intervention—disease was after all an obstacle to development. Medicine was a way of demonstrating benevolent intentions and was a tool in winning over a newly subject population. Medicine became a demonstration of the superior technical, political and military power of the west. However, it was not a simple relationship of giving and taking between the ruler and the ruled, for western medical measures often threatened traditionally held beliefs and practices, leading to reactions. These often became the reason for sacrificing medical objectives to political expediency.

Colonial ideology fed on the civilizing mission of the white man in order to provide legitimacy to colonial rule. This involved the maintenance of law, order and discipline not only with respect to the indigenous subjects but also the lower class Europeans. In this context, Waltraud Ernst examines the European insane in British India, 1800-1858, as a case study in psychiatry and colonial rule. The early lunatic asylums housed not only those who were classified as insane but also vagrants, delinquents, alcoholics and women with no means of livelihood. Considered as disruptive elements, the asylums were seen as a welcome solution by civil and military authorities. Within the asylums, racial prejudice and social distance

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continued from p.14

Ain as well as his awareness of the need for cartographical information about India prompted him to translate the enormous mass of information provided by Abul Fazl into maps. Irfan Habib did the same in his *Atlas of the Mughal Empire* in 1982, without knowing that 200 years earlier a picturesque, somewhat inaccurate, (Mangalore and Karvar being shifted to Gujerat are perhaps the most glaring!) but albeit a brave attempt had been made in the same direction. If the Indian maps in the earlier book have distinct personalities, the fascination of these 21 *suba* maps is that they show Indian art techniques and cartographic details based on d'Anville and on Gentil's own knowledge of routes and places. There is a hierarchy of towns indicated by the symbol of a red palace—a single dome, two domes or three domes indicating relative size. The tiny sketches around the maps are fascinating, for they indicate the artists' and the editor's notions of what was significant in a particular *suba*—the Krishna legend in the Agra *suba* (which includes Mathura), the *pirzada* and the Emperor in the map of Ajmer, the Ellora caves in Aurangabad, Mohurrum observances in Multan, Id celebrations and the Sikh court in Lahore; nearly all of them have sketches of local costumes, of animals, of different occupations (weavers, rope-makers) and recreations (cockfights, elephant-fights the game of eggs [?]). Here is the origin of 'company painting' by Indian artists for foreign patrons. The excellent introduction of Susan Gole and her brief comments on each map supplement the maps and add up to giving us a remarkable example of an 18th century Frenchman's perception of India, yet another in the group of which Sonnerat, du Perron and d'Anville were the leading lights. ❑

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was maintained scrupulously, and the structure of colonial society was reproduced. The author questions the rhetoric of humanitarianism and scientific progress, when seen against the small number and scale of the institutions actually established. It is the ideological and symbolic role of psychiatry as a pillar of colonialism that is significant.

David Arnold takes up the study of smallpox and colonial medicine in nineteenth century India. Though smallpox was known in India for a long time, it has been argued that it was relatively mild in areas like Bengal till Maratha raids and British conquest disrupted rural society, causing famines and dislocation of population that favoured epidemics. The Indians had some knowledge of treatment and experimented with variolation (inoculation with smallpox matter). It has its own practitioners known as tikadars or mark-bearers in eastern India. Variolation was accompanied by rituals and the worship of the Goddess Sitala. In the early nineteenth century vaccination was introduced into India. It was a major attempt to take British medicine to the masses, but the early attempts were met by hostility. Devoid of ritualism and a religious aura, it provoked the reaction that the putting of the tika (mark) was an attempt to violate caste. State intervention took the form of the Vaccination Act of 1880. To many British it represented a triumph of science over superstition, but to the Indians it represented the coercive nature of colonialism. In its implementation, the vaccination programme exhibited the ambivalence of the British attitudes—fearful of the consequences of too strict an intervention, a gradualist approach to social change was taken up.

I.J. Catanach takes up the case of the plague which came to Bombay (from Hong Kong) in 1896. It spread rapidly but little was known about it. Experiences in Hong Kong were duplicated and the army was used to segregate and carry on disinfecting operation. Walter Rand, the Indian Civil Service officer who was placed in charge of operations in Poona was assassinated in June, 1897. As the plague spread to Bengal and Punjab, the fear grew that stringent segregation rules would evoke further hostility. A great deal of relaxation followed and practitioners of Indian Medicine, hakims and vaids, were employed for the supervision of public and private hospitals and camps.

> Prior to the 1940's, so far as plague was concerned, India remained basically at the mercy of the vast impersonal demographic forces that the Annalistes are perpetually emphasizing, and in fact there was very little that either the practitioners of western medicine or the officials, could do about it."
>
> I.J. Catanach, "Plague and the Tensions of empire: India 1896-1918."

In 1901–1902, the rural districts of Punjab were hard hit by the plague. By then Waldemar Haffkine's experiments with plague vaccine had yielded some results and almost half a million villages were inoculated. However, it backfired when on 30 October, 1902, at a village called Malkowal nineteen of those inoculated contracted tetanus and died. The spurt of official energy to combat the plague was dissipated. It was not till the 1920's and 1930's that plague began to diminish in India due to factors unrelated to official policy and practice. The study plays up the importance of imperial and political considerations as opposed to medical and scientific considerations in the approach to the plague and its treatment. At another level it also exposes the tensions of empire, as rivalries and differences between the British Government and the Government of India, and its services and departments lay revealed.

In a very imaginative treatment Malcolm Nicolson shows the relationship between medicine and racial policies in the nineteenth century in New Zealand. Differing images and different attitudes to the Maoris reflected the interests of different political groups. For instance, Arthur Thomson, who came to New Zealand as Surgeon-Major in 1847 gave the Maoris a clean bill of health. Was it coincidental that the Governor, and immigration companies were wishing to attract settlers to New Zealand to establish European domination? The author observes, "Medical images of the Maoris were cultural constructs, expressing not empirical reality but a particular relationship between that reality and a specific observer". Medical institutions had a variety of social uses, other than healing. To the missionaries, hospitals were instruments of Christian charity and conversion, while to the Colonial office they served the interests of racial amalgamation, when that policy was being advocated. Medical institutions and knowledge, far from being neutral, were often ideological.

> .....medical knowledge of the indigenous peoples of the Empire is best regarded in an instrumental and materialistic manner, as part of the technology of empire, as one of the vast variety of tools with which European historical actors sought to advance their social and material interests in the colonies.
>
> Malcolm Nicholson, "Medicine and racial politics: Changing images of the New Zealand Maori in the nineteenth century."

The Belgians look back with pride on their colonial medical services in the Congo, and in particular their campaign to fight the epidemic sleeping sickness, in the early twentieth century. Supported by the belief that western technology and medicine were far superior to the primitive African methods, the colonial authorities felt justified in asserting total control. Their policies reflected the paternalistic nature of Belgian colonial policy. Sleeping sickness policy was intertwined with broader issues of territorial administration. It showed the conflict of interests shaping colonial policy, for example, the medical need to restrict movements of people in and out of the Congo, and the colonial need for labour movement in the Kilo-Moto Gold Mines, and army and road construction. The bureaucratic and pervasive nature of Belgian colonial policy touched upon the myriad aspects of African policy and helped to shape the political and administrative character of imperialism in the early Belgian Congo.

Even nationalist historians in the Philippines while recounting the heroic Filipino struggle to defend their independence in 1899-1902 against the American onslaught speak approvingly of the competent American efforts to fight the 1902-1904 cholera epidemic. Reynaldo C. Ileto in "Cholera and the origins of the American sanitary order in the Philippines" however shows that much of that understanding has rested on the accounts of the epidemic by those who were the architects of the anti-cholera measures, and points instead to the issue of colonial domination. The study shows the continuance between the war and the war against Cholera, in the "pacification" of the Filipinos and the suppression of cholera. The role of medicine and its practitioner was to bring to a close the chapter of the Philippines-American war.

The 1918 influenza in Southern Rhodesia and the European responses to it were seen by most Africans as murderous and irrelevant. As they questioned the efficacy of European medicine to deal with it, they turned increasingly to indigenous techniques and medicines. Terence Ranger in studying the influenza pandemic in Southern Rhodesia points to the manner in which the epi-

By focussing upon the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time of momentous change in the history of Western medicine as in the lives of most non-European peoples, by identifying disease and medicine as a site of contact, conflict and possible eventual convergence between western rulers and indigenous peoples, by illustrating the contradictions and rivalries within the imperial order itself, by identifying the importance of medicine and disease to the ideological and political framework of empire, and by drawing attention to the role of medical agencies and practices in shaping the impact and identity of colonial regimes, the contributors demonstrate the centrality of disease and medicine to any understanding of imperial rule.

From Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies

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demic gave an impetus and legitimacy to the emergence of African anti-medicine movements.

John Farley in "Bilharzia: A problem of Native Health, 1900-1950" tests the validity of the assumption that the benefits of tropical medicine were one of the triumphs of colonialism. Bilharzia, an immunological disease induced by eggs of schistosome flukes that live in the blood vessels of the human gut or bladder wall, is a disease of rural poverty. Farley has studied it with respect to Egypt, and Africa. Before the Second World War, colonial authorities took little action regarding the disease, which was considered primarily to be the black man's disease. The American campaign in Leyte (1944) changed this when Bilharzia appeared among American troops. The American entry into the Second World War gave a fresh spurt within the U.S. to the study of tropical medicine. In 1944, the American Foundation of Tropical Medicine obtained $ 75,000/- for use in teaching and research. The author shows how the disease had to threaten white troops and soldiers before action would be taken. It is interesting that the people whom it really benefited were the researchers and doctors for whom new career opportunities opened up. The real problems of poverty and malnutrition with which bilharzia was linked were buried.

The endemic problem of colonial malnutrition between the wars is taken up by Michael Worboys. The first major survey of nutritional problems in the colonies was the African Tour of John Boyd Orr, head of the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen. The main conclusion drawn from this was that diet would increase the value of the "the native as an economic factor". The author shows how different attitudes and approaches shaped the transformation of the conceptualisation of nutrition from a major structural problem to a technical problem. The problems of colonial malnutrition was to be solved by the appropriate expertise and cooperation between nutritional experts, doctors, anthropologists, teachers and economists. The stress on native backwardness masked discussion on the recent origins of the problem: "Colonial malnutrition was rapidly and readily reconstructed from being seen as an epidemic problem to an endemic one, for which colonialism, had little responsibility and over which it could exercise little control".

Well researched and well written, this collection of essays rests the validity of its assumptions on empirical evidence. It tells us a lot about the disease and even more of the nature of imperialism—the complex and conflicting interests that shaped imperial policy. Western medical science is examined as one of the pillars of imperialism in providing a rationale in the efforts to transform societies in the light of its own notion of progress, sanitation and medicine. At the centre of the study is neither the disease nor the medicine but what they reveal about the nature of imperialism. ❑

Beginnings of A Remarkable Life

INDER MALHOTRA

ONE MORE LIFE: VOLUME I

By P.N. Haksar

Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 122, Rs 125.00

It must be because of our ancient tradition to rely on the word of mouth rather than recorded history that the practice of eminent public men writing their autobiographies or memoirs has not caught on in this country. A surprisingly large number of politicians, civil servants, scientists, soldiers and so on, including those who have a lot to say that might otherwise be lost to succeeding generations, remain strangely reluctant to put pen to paper. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. But their output so far, by and large, has been indifferent, often self-seeking and at times singularly unforthcoming.

Against this backdrop the first of Mr P.N. Haksar's three-volume autobiography, titled, with the mild self-deprecation typical of him, *One More Life*, comes as a breath of fresh air. For this charming little book of only 120 pages, though covering only the first sixteen years of the author's life (1913-1929), is remarkable for its candour, courage and outspokenness, qualities which wee to distinguish Mr Haksar from the general run of his contemporaries and make him play the role that he did in the service of India first as a diplomat, then as arguably the ablest chief adviser to the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, and since then as one of the very few elder statesmen the country can boast of.

In recounting his evolution from infancy to adolescence, Mr Haksar slurs over nothing. For instance, his account of his instruction into the mysteries of sex and procreation by his older and better informed school mates, could not have been more straightforward or unselfconscious. The discovery that men and women did in private what bulls and cows did publicly was combined, however, with the disturbing realisation that homosexuality was rather widely prevalent. It was a big blow to him when the principal of his school put paid to his efforts to start a theatre group because the staging of the first play has led to "love affairs" between some of the actors and the rather "soft" boys who had done the female roles!

Far more important than this is the transparent honesty of Mr Haksar's description of his relationship of deep attachment to his mother and of much resentment against his seemingly stern and aloof father because his father made his mother "cry and sob" all too often.

His mother's sobs, says Mr Haksar in a moving passage, "hung like a dark cloud over my being". Once on a summer fullmoon night, his mother was in a "particularly disconsolate state". Young Haksar found himself sleepless. "Welling up within me was an overpowering antagonism towards my father. I had heard about the power of a curse, and cursed my father, wishing him dead. I had hardly uttered this curse when I was seized with terror at the thought of Father's death. I jumped out of bed and tiptoed towards his bed. As I put my hand in front of his nose, he emitted a loud snore. . . Immensely relieved that he was alive, I returned to bed and, for the first time prayed that Father would live long".

There is a lot else of value in the slim volume: a painstaking inquiry into his ancestry; a brilliant description of the lives and mores of the Kashmiri Pandit clans living far away from their ancestral land and while living in hot, dusty plains, preserving their identity with not inconsiderable help from their "gurus" (priests) and cooks; and an evocative account of the small towns of what is now Madhya Pradesh and was then the Central Province and Berar where Mr Haksar grew up.

"Whenever I think of wilderness, I think of Sakoli," says the author. Even for the mofussil towns of the early part of the century, Sakoli was almost literally the back of beyond. His father was Munsif there and it was there that young P.N. first became aware of the world around him. The introduction to the world could not have been more daunting. At Sakoli, wilderness began right at his doorstep. The Haksars had no neighbours. The Munsif's court on the other side of the house was alive by day, echoing the resonant voice of his father's peon and P.N.'s friend, summoning the plaintiffs and re-

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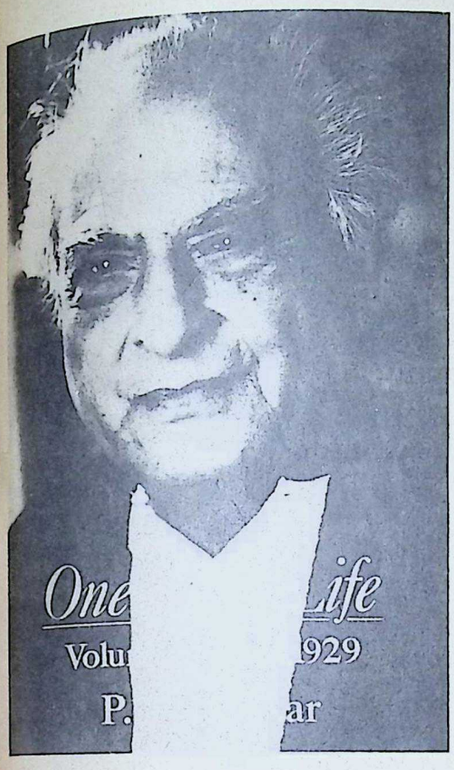

spondents. But, by the evening, eerie silence took over. Thus, at a very early age, Mr Haksar learnt to cope with "loneliness within and wilderness without". He also developed a fascination for railway trains which has stayed with him to this day.

Above all, however, the first volume of Mr Haksar's trilogy is invaluable because of the insights into the development of both the mind and the character which has made Mr Haksar what he is: a man committed to certain values which he would not give up, no matter what the cost. Here too the foundations were laid at desolate Sakoli.

Sitting and talking to his mother one morning in 1918, P.N., nicknamed Babu, heard "my father's familiar voice raised in the kind of rage which would always strike terror in my heart". Rushing out, he saw a "rivetting" scene. His father, "looking taller than his six feet", was shouting and gesticulating. A flustered visitor, trying to prevent his turban from falling with one hand, was busy collecting with the other hand the contents of a basket–fruits, fresh and dried, sweets, marigold garlands–which the Munsif Saheb had evidently kicked away. For P.N.'s father was warning the stranger of the dire consequences if he so much as dared to bring a Diwali gift again.

Terrified the young P.N. returned to his mother and asked for an explanation for what had happened. "Your father," she had replied, "is quick tempered by nature. But today he is right in losing it. That miserable wretch thinks he can bribe your father. He does not realise that we cannot be bought. Such is the family pride". In speaking of the primacy of sense of honour, she had used the word *khandani*. Reflecting on this expression in later years, he could draw from it only one meaning: "that our sense of self-respect prevented us from bendind and bowing". "I have thus cherished deeply but quietly a sense of self-respect within me–and someone has said that self-respect is the best quality human beings could have to fight the beast within them". The book has a lot more in this genre but the reader should savour it by himself or herself.

Also worthy of attention is the sociological and even political flavour of the second and the third decade of this century in various parts of the subcontinent with which *One More Life* is replete. Gandhi had appeared on the Indian scene with elemental force by the time P.N. was ready to go to university at Allahabad. Some of the author's elder relatives had jumped into the freedom movement, but most, including his father, continued to serve the British even though his mother told him that the English were a *badzaat qaum* ("a nation of scoundrels").

At the spacious Lahore residence of Mr Haksar's *mamu* (maternal uncle), a constant theme used to be the "fairness and sense of justice" of the British. But for this, said the *mamu* proudly, he could not have become a member of the prestigious Indian Political Service. This, combined with derogatory references to the Mahatma, whose *Jai* was being shouted all over the country, puzzled teenaged P.N. His mother smiled "rather indulgently" and told him that his *mamu* was a "bit of a toady", an expression the meaning of which had to be explained to him. This raised the question of conflict of loyalties. Shouldn't those serving the Raj not be loyal to it? Wouldn't those behaving otherwise be *namak-haram*?

"Loyalty," said Mr Haksar's mother, "was certainly a virtue, but the big question in life was choosing between conflicting loyalties". She gave her son the example of Motilal Nehru and said that he, too, was "very loyal to the British until he decided that loyalty to one's country was of a higher order". Another powerful and lasting impact had been made on what was to become not just another life but an exceptional one.

All this and much more is a tantalizing trailer to the full-length film yet to come. Or, if one might mix one's metaphors, especially in relation to someone who is both a *gourmet* and a superlative cook, the present delightful volume whets the appetite for the two more in the offing. ❑

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CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

A.G. Noorani

SOVIET POWER AND THE THIRD WORLD

By Rajan Menon

Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1990, pp. 261, Rs. 48.00

This work appears at a time when the Soviet Union's interests in the Third World as a battle ground in the cold war has receded as its interest in a detente with the United States has increased. That is the first priority which President Mikhail Gorbachev has set before himself in foreign policy. Next come Western Europe, with Germany as its core, China and Japan. The Third World comes after them. This is not to say that this sector of international society is ignored. It is not and cannot be.

But the spate of recent writings in the Soviet press, by academics and journalists and the reports by correspondents abroad in Soviet periodicals reveal a feeling almost of disenchantment. Similar sentiments have been voiced over the years in the press and also official circles of the other super-power. In both cases they are a reaction to over-involvement. In both cases external involvements proved costly, unproductive and in some cases, humiliating. Brezhnev was the prime interventionist, Gorbachev provides the sage counsel of "reasonable sufficiency" in defence and relationships abroad attuned to real needs. Realities of the situation at home have finally seeped in.

In the period immediately following the War the Soviet Union was preoccupied with tightening its hold on Eastern Europe and fending off Western interest there. Mao was not exactly encouraged. The invasion of South Korea was an opportunist aberration. Not so, however, was the intervention in Iran and the pressures on Turkey. They were a remarkable continuation of pursuit of Soviet geo-political interests as propounded by Molotov to Ribbentrop at Berlin on November 26, 1940. They covered the Gulf and the Dardanelles. Stalin, moreover, distrusted the newly independent States.

It was Khruschev who began the involvement with the Third World. But he had ideological considerations besides those of realpolitic. Only, in those days the Soviet Union was not strong enough to back words with deeds.

Dr. Rajan Menon's book is an excellent study of the course of that involvement over some three decades. This Indian edition is a help to Indian students. The work draws on original sources, Soviet and Western, and is meticulously researched. It demolishes the scare theories of the West and its acolytes. It should also induce furious rethinking among the acolytes of the Soviet Union in India. Many among the erstwhile foreign policy establishment of old would find it uncomfortable reading.

The author traces the rise of Soviet involvement in the Third World and analyses its motivation and results. This was a drive with a purpose and that central aim of Soviet policy has remained constant. It is to be an equal partner of the United States in the shaping of the world order. The Third World provided a front when this partnership was questioned. It lost importance as detente progressed.

Brezhnev opportunistically moved into Angola and Ethiopia, through Cuba and directly into Afghanistan when he thought that he could get away with it. Under him supply of arms increased and so did despatch of men. In a real sense, Brezhnev made Reagan possible. Defeat induced rethinking.

The focus of this book is on the Brezhnevian phase of active involvement when the Soviet Union had amassed impressive military power. Dr. Rajan considers it from three aspects—Soviet theory on East-West competition in the Third World; the status and significance of its "power projection forces"; and, the usefulness of arms transfers in its policy.

On the first he utters a caveat we would do well to heed. "Two errors must be avoided in analyzing the writings of Soviet scholars. The first is to exaggerate their diversity by dividing specialists into hawks and doves, older traditionalists and younger innovators. Though tantalizing, such simplistic dichotomies are not consistently supported by the evidence. Moreover, the obsession with documenting disagreements can divert attention from resilient ideas and persistent themes. Ideas that survive over time presumably have won official acceptance. They make it worthwhile to use Soviet writings to understand the intellectual environment of Soviet policy makers. The second error is to stress the existence of a monolithic, unchanging Soviet view. As we shall see, although they operate within a prescribed ideological framework, Soviet scholars do differ on specific points. Unorthodox ideas are presented, although because of the existence of censorship they tend to be introduced elliptically, obliquely, or even allegorically." This is all the more so now in the age of glasnost than it was before.

Soviet ideologies viewed the involvement in different terms. Some saw it as a means of helping peoples to "defend their revolutionary gains". Others were more realistic. Certainly Soviet policy was more pragmatic than many writers imagined. There was no uniform policy of aid regardless of the circumstances. Soviet policy was governed "not by some a *priori* doctrine of power projection or proletarian internationalism but by a calculated assessment based on the location of the state, the nature of Soviet interests involved, and the anticipated reaction of the United States."

Long before Gorbachev appeared on the scene, a specialist like Malcolm Mackintosh summed up Soviet objectives in terms Gorbachev will not disown: "The Soviet Union's main preoccupations are with its national security, its superpower status, its relationship with the United States, its confrontation with the West in Europe and its relationship, and its problem with China. In some senses, the Middle East in near enough to one of those areas (Europe and the Mediterranean) to be partially involved in those fundamental relationships, and Japan is an essential element in the balance of power in the Far East. Activity in the rest of the world is regarded in Moscow as a vital aspect of a superpower's rights and duties. But it is still very much a 'bonus' in Soviet foreign policies, and the effect on the balance of power is not really significant."

Even at the best of times, in the halcyon days of the Brezhnev era when interventionism was at its height, the country's capacity for intervention was "markedly inferior to that of the United States," subject, of course to the geographical factor which gives one an advantage which the other cannot overcome. All in all, the U.S. has always had a far greater capacity for power projection than the Soviet Union. This, of course did not deter Gromyko from proclaiming before the 24th Party Congress in 1971 that no major international problem could be resolved without regard to the interests of the USSR.

But there simply was neither a grand strategy for intervention nor a military capacity. Dr. Menon goes a step further. He holds that "the acquisition of military forces designed for intervention in distant Third World areas has not been a major priority of Soviet policy". Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan were but "three unrelated events" in which assessment of American reaction or the absence of it played no part.

Motivations for arms transfers are no less diverse. They govern all States alike—to influence states, increase the security of allies, obtain military facilities, and so forth. Major powers consider

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arms sales an essential tool of foreign policy; they remain unmoved by attempts to show that "the results are pernicious and the benefits illusory. Economically, large arms sales provide the seller various benefits; hard currency, jobs in regions dependent on defense industries, a foot in the door for civilian exports, and lower production costs for expensive weapons."

Neither superpower can boast of unqualified successes. Each has reaped advantages and tasted snubs and rank ingratitude. Arms transfers receive special emphasis in this book. The Soviet Union has had to rely heavily on them because it could not compete with the West in cultural diplomacy or economic aid. It has been fairly liberal. In 1968 it gave arms to Pakistan to our chagrin to little advantage. It fared worse at Sadat's hands, because it could not give what he really wanted.

Once in the business, the supplier is eager to keep up the relationship and supply modern armaments only to keep out others. The passages concerning India deserve to be quoted in *extenso*: "This occurred in 1978 when India ended its search for a modern deep-strike aircraft—needed to replace its aging fleet of Hunters and Canberras—by signing a $1 billion agreement with Britain for the purchase and subsequent licensed production of the Anglo-French Jaguar. In an obvious effort to block the deal, the Soviet Union offered the MIG-23 for licensed production at favourable prices. Determined to retain its position in India's arms market, and fearful that the Jaguar decision might be the prelude to an Indian policy of lessening the dependence on Soviet arms, the USSR extended India a $ 1.6 billion loan in 1980, which India later used to buy ground attack and interceptor versions of the MIG-23 aircraft and T-72 tanks—both are also to be made in India under license—as well as MIG-25s.

"The pattern repeated itself in 1982 when France was attempting to sell its Mirage 2000 to India. As negotiations proceeded between France and India, the Soviet Defence Minister, Marshal Ustinov, arrived in India at the head of a large delegation of military officers and offered to sell more MIG-25s for rupees and raised the possibility of allowing India to produce under license the MIG-27 ground-attack aircraft. Once again the effort failed; the Mirage contract was signed with India agreeing to purchase 40 of the aircraft from the French producer, Dassault-Breguet. But the agreement gave India the option to manufacture another 110 of the aircraft under license—and this part of the deal had yet to be signed. Determined to ward off challenges to its position in the Indian market, the Soviet Union again made a counter offer. During the fall of 1983, in a meeting with Indian officials, Ustinov offered to sell the MIG-29 and the T-80 tank."

The MIG-29 had yet to become a part of the Soviet armed forces. The T-80 tank had just been tested. The three largest recipients of Soviet arms have been Iraq, Libya and Syria. India and Algeria follow next in that order.

This has not prevented the Soviet Union from distancing itself diplomatically from the buyer when its interests so dictated. It was, for instance, against the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. Tashkent provides another lesson. Likewise the recipient follows its own interests—as did Pakistan *vis a vis* the U.S. in its China policy from 1961 onwards.

Realism is the hall-mark of Dr. Rajan Menon's study. He does not exaggerate either Soviet failures or successes. "Arms transfers have provided the USSR with a means to establish a presence in key Third World countries which, because of their dependence on Soviet Union. Arms supplies have also been the chief mechanism by which the USSR has acquired what I have termed complementary influence. They also have been useful for gaining military rights—sometimes of a substantial nature—in strategically located countries." But once the congruence of interests of the giver and taker is disturbed, the influence of the one over the other wanes.

With the radical change in the domestic scene in the USSR, its perception of its interests in the Third World has changed in significant respects. There is a greater awareness of the perils and pitfalls of external involvements. It is too early to predict the results of the current debate. All we can say is that things will never be quite the same again. More likely than not, we will have, not a withdrawal from the Third World, but a fundamental pruning of the involvement there. ❑

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IN THE DRAGON KINGDOM

A. K. Damodaran

MY PEKING MEMOIRS OF THE CHINESE INVASION OF INDIA

By Purnendu Kumar Banerjee

Clarion Books, 1990 pp. 193, Rs. 150.00

This is a relaxed account of an unusual chapter in India's diplomatic history. Dr. Banerjee gives a rather misleading sub-title to his book *The Chinese Invasion of India*. In actual fact the invasion is only one episode in a long chronicle of personal contacts, discussions and negotiations between the Indian Embassy in Peking and the Chinese Foreign Office. It is something which occurs off stage and physically intrudes into the day-to-day life in Peking only months after the conflict, when some Indian prisoners of war were brought to the Embassy before their return to India. The invasion came as a surprise to everyone and so it would be anachronistic to view earlier developments with the anger and hurt pride which the military humiliation led to. From the point of view of the Chief of the Indian Mission in Peking there was a great deal of interesting happenings in the twenty months after Dr. Banerjee's arrival in China and the border conflict. It was a period of hectic, frustrating diplomatic activity for the Indian Envoy in the Chinese capital. The decisions were made in India and communicated when necessary to the Chinese Embassy in Delhi. In Peking, in exact symmetry, the Chinese Foreign Office flooded the Embassy with protest notes which it was the business of the Mission to transmit to New Delhi. One was at the receiving end in both contexts. There is thus very little of actual substance of the border dispute in these pages. In the Embassy, officers were expected to be familiar with the details but could not seriously contribute to any strategic planning in our relations with China. This is probably the reason why this record is almost totally oblivious of one major negative development throughout the fifteen months from May 1961 when Banerjee arrived in Peking to the sweep across the Himalayas in October 1962. At the very beginning comes R.K. Nehru's conversation with the Chinese Prime Minister in July 1961 which obviously had some substantive aspects. Unfortunately Dr. Banerjee was not present in these discussions in Shanghai. During the next 18 months there is an inexplicable gap in the diplomatic attempts by both countries to bridge the gap. This is the most intense, and, in retrospect, banal and sterile period of reciprocal protest notes on land and air violations. There is nothing really to indicate that a serious attempt was made to match in diplomatic negotiations the forward policy which had been carefully worked out by Nehru himself to reassert India's claim in disputed territory. As Dr. Gopal has noticed the policy was predicated on a strong line of well-equipped, fully manned bases in the rear. This was not done effectively or done piecemeal and, perhaps, provides one explanation of the military debacle. On the ground there was inadequacy in the implementation of excellent ideas. In diplomacy there was clamour and noise on minor events, but a deafening silence on vital issues of national interest. It was a communications disaster.

This absence of effective substantive negotiations is all the more surprising because the point of no return had not been reached at all; technically, the relations were normal. Interestingly enough, it was precisely during this period that Banerjee establishes a relaxed, friendly, admirably frank relationship with Chou-Enlai. This was, by any diplomatic standard, a superb personal achievement. Prime Ministers of great countries have no time for counsellors incharge of Missions representing unfriendly countries. It goes to the credit of Chou-Enlai that he had no protocol inhibitions. He continued to send signals through Banerjee about the need for further discussions. In a major episode he sends a personal verbal message to Jawaharlal Nehru which seems to be, with the advantage of hindsight, almost a signal for assistance in a very difficult domestic situation. Today, we know how divided, bitter and potentially fratricidal the relations between the first six or seven leaders in China were in those terrible months after the failure of the Great Leap Forward and well before Lu Shao Chih's and Chou-Enlai's successful attempt at some return to normalcy through a policy of readjustment. We know all about Nehru's problems because of the Parliament debates. Banerjee's straightforward and honest record of his meetings with Chou-Enlai confirm the impression made by at least some scholars in later years that Chou-Enlai had his problems too: he appears to have been in a minority in attempting to work out a compromise with India. Here, there is one detail which Banerjee surprisingly does not mention. Ambassador Parthasarathi had left on a normal transfer to Pakistan in 1961; no replacement arrived. Banerjee was asked to soldier on as Charge d'affaires. The Chinese, whose touchiness on protocol matters is well known, seemed to have behaved with reasonable restraint; they chose to ignore the diplomatic snub and any loss of face. Their Ambassador stayed on for some months in Delhi, returned to Peking on leave and then came back to India to make his farewell calls as late as mid 1962. It was only then that the Chinese acknowledged the Indian decision to downgrade the status of the Mission. In any objective enough analysis such details, friendly to the other party are important. They chose to ignore the diplomatic snub and any loss of face. Banerjee is fair enough but on the core Sino-Indian relationship, he continues to entertain the same puzzled, angry, subjective reaction which he had during the days of actual trauma. This could have been avoided in a retrospective exercise.

It is in the actual conduct of diplomatic activity in Peking at a difficult time that Banerjee comes out as a resounding success. He established comfortable relations with both Chou-Enlai and Chen Yi. Both of them were accessible to him because of the seriousness of the issues involved in the relationship between the two countries. He made this happy accident into a powerful diplomatic instrument. There were many other brilliant diplomats in the Chinese Foreign Office at that time. The Vice Foreign Minister, Keng Piao, and Chang Wen Chien, the Head of the Division, who was a superb

A.K. Damodaran is a former diplomat who once served in Beijing.

> *Ambassador Dr. Purnendu K. Banerjee does not interject in his book propagandistic ideas or self-defeating ejaculatory phrases of spite or hatred. This is its merit. It tells us the facts, in an entertaining and vivid way, but it also maintains a steady vision of the future. Hence this book is necessary reading for all Indians and all Chinese who wish to know more about these troubled years, in order that they may not ever be repeated.*
>
> *I am looking forward to a Chinese translation of the book, as I think they will prove most valuable for Chinese historians as well as the common reader.*
>
> *From the Foreword by Han Suyin*

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diplomat with a long record of association with Chou-Enlai and had co-authored the official report on the boundary with Jagat Mehta. Apart from the Foreign Office, contacts had necessarily to be limited to the diplomatic Corps and the few foreign journalists stationed in Peking. In the conditions of cloistered seclusion, the diplomatic life in Peking tended to be hectic. Everyone helped each other, such cooperation cutting across ideological divergences.

☆

It is the stories and the anecdotes scattered all over the book which make it so effortlessly charming. He (Banerjee) comes through as a well-organised, effective raconteur who can place himself in odd, comic and sometimes "high serious" situations with a certain amount of detachment.

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A physically immediate impression of all this is conveyed by the author in this book. What I miss here is the other equally exciting intellectual experience of life in Peking in those days. In one sense, since most of us had very little normal protocol obligations, no Indian guests to look after, we were forced to fall back upon an intense study of the Chinese scene. China's relations with India, the assessment by other diplomats of the exact state of those relations and, equally important, as the months dragged on, of the growing alienation between China and the Soviet Union. These experiences made the Peking posting rich and rewarding for both the concerned journalists and the committed diplomat. Usually diplomatic life is seen by sardonic outsiders as a 'moving toyshop'. In Peking we had the feeling, probably self serving, that we were in an affluent but serious study circle. Surprisingly enough this does not come through in these Memoirs. Surprisingly, because during my conversations with Banerjee in my four months' association with him at the end of his tenure I absorbed a lot from him on these and many other aspects. His brilliant encapsulation of China's motives in sending Chou-Enlai abroad for his Asia-Africa tour in December 1963 was the result of many conversations with many of his diplomatic colleagues. It was a very clear, lucid presentation from which all his junior colleagues benefitted. It is this element of analytical excitement which I miss in this otherwise very satisfactory record. But we can forgive Banerjee for his own priorities because after all, it is his book. It is the stories and the anecdotes scattered all over the book which make it so effortlessly charming. He comes through as a well-organised, effective raconteur who can place himself in odd, comic and sometimes "high serious" situations with a certain amount of detachment. He cannot be faulted for excessive modesty but he is never irritatingly vain or egoistic. He is complacent about the fact that he is able to move on easy terms with captains and the kings, with the Nehrus and the Chous and he is human enough to show his irritation with condescension or plain bad manners from his temporary official superiors. All this makes for a good story.

Three anecdotes have some interest. There is the 'summer palace crisis' when some Chinese youths, totally oblivious of diplomatic decorum, physically assaulted the Finnish Ambassador and the Dutch Charge d'affaires for daring to photograph an old man resting in blissful tranquillity. The xenophobia tendencies encouraged day after day in official propaganda burst out in a moment of virulent anger. The episode ended happily enough; only the films were destroyed but in the subsequent diplomatic discussion Ambassador Toivola, an anxious sinophil if ever there was one, was rudely shocked by the Chinese version of the events. In the opinion of the Wei Chapou (Chinese Foreign Office) in any relationship, quarrel or "understanding" between a Chinese and a foreigner it is always the foreigner who is at fault. It is an action which seems to transcend ideological changes. I was one day called to the Foreign Office and an angry protest was made about a rape incident in Shanghai. Inquiries elucidated the detail that young Das, a respectable enough trader in spices, had fallen in love with a Chinese young lady. There was a child. In the Foreign Office vocabulary it was a straightforward case of rape. Going through the older records I discovered that P.N. Menon, in 1948, had also been told about a similar incident in Tientsin by the KMT Foreign Office. It was also a case of inter-ethnic affection but the Foreign Office functionary was clear in judging it as a case of assault, a rather simple criterion. Banerjee tells the *Summer Palace* story with good humour; sometimes this contrived misunderstanding could turn ugly as our very young diplomats Raghunath and Vijai Pillai discovered during the Cultural Revolution.

Two other incidents of serious diplomatic import are described by Banerjee. When the Bandung Conference anniversary was observed in April 1963, many months after the aggression, Banerjee attended it to the obvious pleasure of Chou-Enlai who held up the proceedings for the Indian Envoy's late arrival. Here again Chinese courtesy and decorum seem to be as much responsible as a very human desire to tease the Indians. This was not very much appreciated in the Indian press or Parliament.Something of the uncertainty and embarrassment in which a diplomat has to function in such a hostile surrounding and with an audience at home only too anxious to blame the government for everything comes through in these stories. More serious was Banerjee's presence at the function for Mr. Bhutto who had come to negotiate the China-Pakistan border accord. Banerjee had asked for permission to stay away. Delhi sent definite instructions to him to attend the reception. There was the inevitable hullabaloo in Parliament and the Prime Minister who had not been properly briefed did not defend his envoy. Banerjee is expectedly bitter. But it can now be seen that the Foreign Office had a genuine enough problem. The India-Pakistan negotiations were going on between Mr. Swaran Singh and Mr. Bhutto. It would have been counter-productive to introduce a totally extraneous new element of irritation in the midst of these negotiations. One feels that Banerjee should have appreciated it all this himself. This is, however, no excuse for the Foreign Office for not having explained all this to him and gently apologised for the misunderstanding. This was not done. As on many other occasions the poor man in Peking is left with a feeling of being let down by his immediate colleagues. He had the best of relations with N.J. Desai, earlier Foreign Secretary and, later, Secretary General, he is very comfortable with Nehru and reports to him with a sense of total freedom when he returns to India during his posting and also at the end of his stay on return from China. This last encounter with the tired, disillusioned great man is described with sympathy and understanding. There was great empathy between Chou-Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru and Banerjee had the good luck to be one of the links at a very difficult time. The manner in which either statesman tried to salvage something out of a rapidly deteriorating crisis is described with great effect in the many exchanges between the author and the two great men.

☆

Most of us, however, found it easy enough to get along with this amiable, good-natured, and let us face it, not very demanding, senior colleague. As relevant as these charming details is his happy immersion in the hectic social life in the diplomatic ghetto in Peking.

☆

At the end of it all, there was total disillusionment on either side. We can forgive the two harassed statesmen in the midst of rival demands of unfair feelings towards each other. The time has come for history to judge. When this is done, each would be found to have a certain respectable, decent record of fidelity to his country's national interest coupled with diplomatic imagination.

I had the good fortune to be Banerjee's immediate deputy during the last few months of his tenure in Peking. What impressed me most then and

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AN AGENDA FOR ECONOMIC REFORM: A REPORT

T.C.A. Anant

INDIA: AN INDUSTRIALIZING ECONOMY IN TRANSITION, World Bank, Country Economic Memorandum, 1987, $19.95

INDIA: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND MEDIUM-TERM ISSUES, World Bank, Country Economic Memorandum, 1988, $11.95

INDIA: POVERTY EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES, World Bank, Country Economic Memorandum 1989, $19.95

Exclusive distributors in India, Allied Publishers Limited.

... the World Bank has released for wider circulation a set of three studies on India covering various aspects of economic and social policy. These reports make a case for a certain direction to economic policy and present an agenda for reform. The arguments have a compelling logic and deserve to be understood.

The decade of the eighties saw India make substantial progress in a number of areas compared to the relative stagnation of the late sixties and early seventies. The main indicators of this progress have been an increased rate of growth in Gross National Product (GNP), particularly a growth in manufacturing output and the beginnings of a decline in the proportion of people under the poverty line. These developments have taken place in the context of a number of regulatory reforms and policy changes, termed as liberalization, initiated since the mid- seventies.

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In recent months there has been a lively discussion on the direction of future policy and the constraints affecting future growth potential. It is in this context interesting to note that the World Bank has released for wider circulation a set of three studies on India covering various aspects of economic and social policy. These reports make a case for a certain direction to economic policy and present an agenda for reform. The arguments have a compelling logic and deserve to be understood. The need for regulatory reform is a consequence of the strategy India adopted for economic development shortly after Independence. This strategy is best described as based on two fundamental assumptions. The first was a concern about dependence on imports and foreign investments, which had its roots possibly in the colonial heritage and the freedom struggle. The assumption also visualized a relatively static external framework and poor potential for expanding exports or using foreign markets to stimulate growth. The second fear was about the consequence of increased inequality, which a relatively unregulated and private economy would create, in a fledgling democracy. In order to address these twin concerns India adopted a strategy for planned development which had import substitution and a large role for the state as its primary components. This was then translated into policies which regulated a number of areas of economic activity. These covered for instance, policies regulating the nature and quantum of private investment through licensing, monopoly clearance for large firms, controls and restrictions on mergers and closures, reservations for small firms, controls on foreign direct investment and royalty payments, import restrictions and high tariffs on a number of commodities. A common feature of all these regulations was a reliance on administrative procedures rather than market controls. In addition there was a large expansion of the public sector in a number of infrastructural and productive sectors of the economy and an increased role of the state in delivering a number of social services.

This elaborate state apparatus had some signal successes particularly in the period till the mid-sixties. There was the creation of a large industrial base diversified in terms of products, location and ownership, a reduction in the importance of foreign capital in domestic markets and the achievement of self-reliance in a number of areas. This growth and performance was not however sustained after the sixties. There has been considerable evidence to suggest that the growth in productivity and employment has not been commensurate with the scale of investment deployed. In addition, restrictions on entry and new investment through regulation have reduced the com-

continued from p.22

what interests me even today is the easy and surprisingly formal relationship he managed to establish between himself and his colleagues. He had some problem colleagues. He refers to a few of them. On some of his more difficult and totally ineffective colleagues he is silent and prudent. Most of us, however, found it easy enough to get along with this amiable, good-natured, and let us face it, not very demanding, senior colleague. As relevant as these charming details is his happy immersion in the hectic social life in the diplomatic ghetto in Peking. This made it much easier for the more introvert individuals in the Embassy to gain some sort of rapport, through him, with my important journalist and useful diplomatic colleagues.

One colleague, Thambi Srinivasan, the Press Attache, flits through these pages with grace, charm and ineffable good humour. In perhaps the best story in the book, Thambi, who was Banerjee's escort, had an unmanageable cough interrupting and disturbing one of Chou-Enlai's lengthier and more urbane discourses. Banerjee was irritated and uncomfortable but managed to keep his cool. When they were leaving the Foreign Office, Thambi turned to his chief and smiled and said, "Wasn't that clever, sir? I did it all on purpose, to confuse the bugging devices". Banerjee was totally disarmed. He knew, of course, that poor Thambi had had a real enough problem because the green tea had gone the wrong way. Thambi had an illustrious subsequent career before his sadly premature death a few years ago. He loved the Chinese language, the Peking opera and *Chinoserie*

Dr Banerjee has had a long and very interesting career both in the Indian Foreign Service and also as an international civil servant. It would be impossible for him or for anyone else for that matter to have such an intense experience of supremely important negotiations conducted at the highest level between two of the most influential statesmen of our century. He should record what he saw and observed in other less dramatic, less exciting posts. ❑

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petitiveness of domestic markets leading to relatively high levels of profits and low incentives for improvements in technology and costs. The oil price shocks of the seventies exposed India's vulnerability to external shocks, due to a manufacturing sector that could not compete in the external markets to raise the necessary foreign exchange. It was in this environment that the policy formulators embarked on a process of regulatory reform to enhance domestic productivity growth and increase the competitiveness of Indian manufacturing in international markets.

> *The growth of the Indian economy during the past two decades, coupled with programs aimed at alleviation of poverty, have led to a significant decline in its incidence. At the same time, however, poverty has become more strongly concentrated in eastern India and more closely associated with landlessness and wage dependency, especially in unirrigated rural areas.*

These reforms took the form of removing or reducing non-tariff controls on the imports of a number of commodities by shifting them to the Open General License (OGL) lists, some simplification in the procedures applicable for the imports of raw materials particularly for the production of exportables, a rationalization of the domestic tax structure by moving towards valued taxes, a reduction in the number of industries subject to licensing controls and an increase in the areas permitted for Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act and Foreign Exchange and Regulation Act (FERA) companies. These changes though limited in nature did have a positive impact and industrial production grew rapidly. This growth was not without its drawbacks chiefly being the lack of any commensurate growth in employment. Further, there is some evidence to suggest that this growth was more in the nature of filling up the slack created by the removal of the restraints imposed by these controls and would slow down unless given an impetus by more reforms. It is in this context that we turn now to a package of reforms as outlined in these documents.

It is worth noting that this entire reform package is based on a greater emphasis on market based rather than administrative procedures of control. This is based primarily on two important considerations. First, policy mechanisms must be compatible with individual incentives in each sector of the economy and second, the system detect and react to changes in the economic environment quickly.

The reform package as described has three main components covering budgetary policy, trade policy and domestic industrial regulation. The agenda for reform presumes a stable domestic macroeconomic environment. In recent years the central (and state) budgets have been marked with increased deficits on the revenue accounts due to increase in government non-developmental expenditures. This has implied an increased reliance on borrowing and money creation to finance current as well as capital expenditures. This has the tendency to increase domestic prices, which then raise the import demands and reduce export performance. This situation then often leads to mistaken beliefs about the impact of the reform package itself. Secondly, government borrowing in a scenario where domestic savings have reached saturation levels would crowd out private investment slowing down growth. For these reasons fiscal restraints are an integral component of any reform package. However these fiscal restraints tend to have unpleasant consequences for government expenditures to provide social services. It is therefore argued that the package of social services needs to be reexamined and its delivery changed so as to restrict attention to the most vulnerable sections. Further greater use should be made of non-governmental organizations in the management and delivery of social services.

The second component of the reform package visualizes the restructuring of the trade policy regime. The main emphasis being on reducing the protectionist barriers as these have been an important reason for the high cost of domestic production and the lack of competitiveness in domestic markets. The policy would consider removal of all quantitative restrictions and replace them with tariffs; secondly, limit the use of commodity specific tariffs through broad banding and a limited set of rates. Over time the attempt should be to then reduce the level of such protection. It is important to note that tariff protection should be provided for limited horizons, otherwise there is almost no domestic incentive to reduce costs. On the export front the choice of options in somewhat limited but the argument is to create an outward orientation by providing export incentives and compensations for the costs introduced by domestic distortions. It is of course clear that an important aspect of export promotion is to improve the productivity of domestic manufacturing.

The reform of the domestic industrial regulation regime has a number of components and it is clearly not feasible to discuss all of them. We will therefore focus attention on the policies concerning large vs. small firms, and conditions of entry and exit.

The growth of large firms was supposed to be controlled by the combined application of the MRTP and the Industrial Licensing regime. The MRTP puts additional requirements and restrictions on large industrial houses from carrying out new investments. This has had the paradoxical effect of maintaining the market power and profits of those firms already in business in a given industry. The provisions of the act also make it difficult for these firms to adapt to changed economic environments by altering their product mix or techniques. It is argued that such ex-ante restrictions based on size are better replaced by a more strict ex-post regime focussing on the RTP aspects of the act which have received less attention.

While the reservations for small scale industries have had the beneficial impact of diversifying ownership of the industrial structure, the actual operation of the policies has a number of lacunas. For example, while there is a strong case for incentives for small scale industries the case for their perpetual and often absolute protection is weak; similarly, the existing incentive framework discourages their graduation from the small scale sector. Growth of these firms should be encouraged eventually leading to dereservation of the concerned products.

> The government of India must promote growth across a number of sectors if it is to ensure a growth rate of five per cent targeted by the Seventh Five-Year Plan. This growth will entail —
>
> - Improving the recent performance of the agricultural section
> - Maintaining the present momentum in manufacturing and power supply
> - Developing new energy sources and greater energy conservation
> - Improving the coverage, efficiency, and delivery of such social services as health and education.

Finally, restrictions on retrenchments, mergers, closure and scale of assets makes it difficult for firms to adapt to changed economic environments and exit the industry. This tends to discourage new entry in that industry and locks up capital in unproductive areas. A related issue concerns the labour legislation in the country that has emphasized the protection of wages and employment. This has had the consequence of making labour more expensive for firms to use relative to capital increasing the capital intensity of domestic manufacturing. Secondly, the implications of the labour laws for plant closures has often meant protection

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of high wage employees at the expense of jobs elsewhere.

The above discussion clearly leaves out a number of important issues like foreign investment, infrastructural investment, tax policies, public sector enterprises and administered prices etc. The general discussion of these follows on similar lines, the primary consideration being the impact of existing policies on the incentives and decisions of firms and other agents.

A crucial aspect in the agenda of any reform measure is on the issue of timing and sequencing of reforms. It is on this latter issue that these documents are the least informative. They do point out the need for phased and simultaneous introduction of both external trade and domestic regulatory reforms over a time frame of five to seven years. There seems to be a greater emphasis on pushing the trade reforms. It is worth pointing out that the issues involved in this area are somewhat complex and cannot be settled by a simple appeal to crossectional reference to the experience of other countries.

Economic analysis tends to be at its weakest in providing answers to questions on the rate of adjustment in response to changes in policy environments. This observation is of importance when one realises that partial or unbalanced reform can have damaging consequences for the economy. A crucial aspect of the discussion of trade policy is in the ability of exports to rise fast enough to offset the increased demand for foreign exchange arising from import liberalization.

> *The industries of India are beginning to operate in a more open, liberalized environment than in the past. Until the mid 1980s, direct controls played a key role in allocating resources. Now, competitive forces have a much greater role in shaping investment, output, and pricing decisions.*

The discussion on export policy spells out a number of incentive schemes and reforms in existing ones as a means to promote exports. However their faith in the ability of export promotion schemes to stimulate exports may be misplaced. The performance of exports is more likely to be linked with the rate of and response to domestic regulatory changes. Particularly as the operation and effect of export incentives on firms that manufacture for both the domestic as well as export markets is not clear. It is likely that a successful export regime lies in a diversified low cost domestic manufacturing sector capable of competing abroad in price and quality.

A failure for exports to rise fast enough could be met by increased concessional or commercial borrowing increases in the former are subject to a number of factors most of which have little to do with economics and in the case of the latter the fact that these borrowings are being made at a time of high and rising trade deficits will limit the scale of such an option.

The above discussion then implies a very distinct possibility for a slowdown in the rate of growth or even a recession as the consequence of such a deficit. This can have adverse consequences for the entire reform process.

It is due to these considerations that one should be careful in setting the pace for different reform policies. There is probably a case for taking up issues on the domestic regulatory agenda before the major shifts in the trade policy. Further a long run policy announcement would aid in removing the uncertainties that may arise on the future stages of reform.

To conclude we should note that in addition to a discussion of policy issues these volumes have a great deal of descriptive and statistical material on a number of aspects of the Indian economy. The material is well organized and clearly presented—an asset to a student of the Indian economy. ❑

There have been frequent requests from our readers for the addresses of publishers. We give below the addresses of the publishers whose books have been reviewed in this issue.—Editor

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KRISHNA CHAITANYA

HISTORY OF PRINTING AND PUBLISHING IN INDIA VOLUME II

By B.S. Kesavan

National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 782, Rs. 126.00

With man, the extraplasmic heritage is far more important than the heredity of the germ plasm. Culture conserves the best contribution of each epoch and passes it on as a precious legacy to the subsequent generations. As Bernard of Tours said, the latter gain a taller stature because they are able to stand on the shoulders of those who have come and gone earlier. Though all the artifacts count here, books are the most important.

But our age is given to intense specialisation of disciplines and if someone is attempting a history of printing and publishing in India, the almost inevitable occupational hazard will be that the content of books and other published material will get scant notice and what we shall get will be the history of printing technology. And strictly in terms of the rationale of specialised studies, the approach will be above criticism. In the circumstances, we should be very grateful to B.S. Kesavan for giving us a monumental work which is as fascinating as cultural history as it is factually complete as a history of printing and publishing. An international figure in bibliography and documentation, Kesavan has been a great lover of books and it is very clear it is this fact that decided his choice of a vocation, and we are benefitting from this happy circumstance.

The sub-title of the work is "A Story of Cultural Reawakening". The book fully substantiates the claim and if the word 'story'—rather than 'history'—is modest, its felicitous too, for the narration is as delightful as a tale of exciting episodes.

If the locations of the earlier printing presses in India were plotted on the map, it will be found that they all hug the coastline of the country, the interface of contact with the maritime west which brought us technology. Goa, Cochin, Punnaikayal near Kanya Kumari, Vypicottah near Cranganur and Ambalakkadu south of Trichur are the important places along the east coast. Fort William, Calcutta and Serampore along the east coast represent the shaping of Indian printing in the second phase. The first volume of the work which appeared in 1985 presented the South Indian origins of printing and its efflorescence in Bengal. And now, in this second volume, Kesavan moves on to a more detailed study of printing and publishing in Karnataka, Andhra and Kerala.

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Christian missionary effort played a great role here in all the states and its contribution deserves grateful acknowledgement. It produced grammars and dictionaries like the Telugu grammar of 1807 and the English-Canarese dictionary of 1844. Benjamin Bailey worked nearly three decades, from 1817 to 1846, to produce the first Malayalam-English dictionary. He also brought out a monthly. Kerala still remembers with gratitude the great services rendered to education by Hermann Gundert. The first edition of his Malayalam grammar came out in 1851. The text-books he prepared for Malayalam included extracts from classic poetic texts like *Ramayanam* and *Sreekrishna Charitam*. The Europeans were keen students of Indian culture. During 1846-48, John Garrett brought out an edition of the *Gita* in Sanskrit, Canarese and English, with an introduction by Warren Hastings. There is a copy of this in the British Museum. Many early books are similarly now available only in such prestigious repositories and their accounts in this volume have involved painstaking research.

Unexpected but welcome are the summative accounts of the literature of all the three languages. We get outline sketches at least of the works of major literary personalities. This narrative is brought up to contemporary times. For instance, in the case of Malayalam, we get accounts of people like Basheer and Thakazhi who are still with us. Thakazhi got the Jnanapith award last year.

Gazetteers were great landmarks in the documentation of our traditions. The *Mysore Gazeteer* (1867-97) was the result of the dedicated work over many years of Benjamin Lewis Rice who had earlier published many Kannada classics.

The survey of the growth of the Indian press cannot be expected to be as detailed as the report of the first Press Commission but, for a book on printing and publishing, it packs an astonishing amount of information on the subject. The history of the freedom struggle itself gathers a broad outline from the account of the growth of the press. Reproductions of the front pages of old periodicals many of which have vanished with the snows of yester-year add a piquant appeal to the volume.

One looks forward eagerly to the the subsequent volumes of this outstanding project. ❑

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Feminist Language: Honing a Regenerative Energy

Lakshmi Kannan

The first annual summit on women was held in Montreal, Canada in June this year. The event coincided with the 50th anniversary celebrations of women's suffrage in Quebec. Nearly 105 speakers from all over the world joined the delegates in this multi-disciplinary conference. The summit called for a "worldwide collective action for women to assume their rightful place in society and to permeate areas of power in all spheres of human activity." We bring to our readers the paper read by Dr. Lakshmi Kannan at the conference.

Editor

We lack words and we have too many of them. And words are also too busy, inviting a hyperactivity of consciousness that is not only dysfunctional in terms of human capacities of feeling and acting, but activity deadens the mind and blunts the senses.

Susan Sontag *The Aesthetics of Silence*

Feminist discourse today has to contend with the deadened habits in language use and comprehension. No movement can effectively influence people without the force of a creative, resurgent energy. Such a creativity percolates down to the level of language, which has to exert itself and stimulate, possibly even provoke people into thinking afresh. While it is commonplace to observe that feminists are clearly far ahead of their times, or that they "dream forward" or "articulate a future tense", as George Steiner would have liked to phrase it (Steiner, 1972: 64), we have another acknowledged expert in the philosophy of language, Noam Chomsky, whose emphasis is on 'novelty' as a main source of stimulation. It is interesting to note that he attributes this novelty to appropriateness of context and unpredictability in terms of external to stimuli and value. This, in combination, ushers in a new knowledge. (Chomsky 1966: 27). But it is not as simple as all that. For projecting a 'new' meaning involves dealing with "Two potentially antagonistic domains of meaning and their relationships" as Sontag explains and it may be helpful to give her apprehensions here at length:

> Language is experienced not merely as something shared but as something corrupted, weighed down by historical accumulation. Thus, for each conscious artist, the creation of work means dealing with two potentially antagonistic domains of meaning and their relationships. One is his own meaning (or lack of it); the other is the set of second-order meanings that both extend his own language and encumber, compromise and adulterate it. The artist ends by choosing between two inherently limiting alternatives... Either he flatters or appeases his audience... or commits an aggression against his audience, giving them what they don't want." (Ibid: 71)

Creativity as an energy, is not confined to artists and writers alone. Creativity is an act of courage, an expression of a political will, something to be used in every moment of our lives and every day of our lives, by all of us.

Language has to cut its way through a stratified reality, a word-clogged reality, slicing its way through the deadened habits of mind, by threatening this habit at the very base. In addition to this mind-made world, there is obviously a great deal of sexism in language. Sexism is rampant, for instance, in some Indian languages in the vernacular. In many of the Indo-European cluster of languages there is a tradition of respect ingrained in the language (unlike the neutrality of English). One expressed respect to a person by referring to her/him in the second person or the third person by using the plural. This facility for a distinction exists in Tamil as well. But when it comes to addressing women, several users of Tamil typically disregard it and blatantly express their disrespect. A man would not concede respect even to his female colleagues who are his equal or superior in terms of status or rank, that is when he talks behind their backs. It is most cowardly to see them grudgingly give respect when face to face with the women. The same men have no hesitation whatever, in giving respect to fellow-men, and even to those beneath their rank. Language then, has precipitated certain stubborn patriarchal patterns. Where the language is English, many people including Kate Millett point out how the general use of language reserves humanity of the general human condition mostly referred to as the male, favouring "the male far more often than the female as referent, or even sole referent," (Millet, 1970: 55). The male referent then has come to denote the 'general' human condition. (Millet, 1970: 55).

Not surprisingly, all the factors have combined to bring about an ignorance regarding women's views, women's speech and of course, women's language, an ignorance so total that it borders on a blind, willful arrogance. Feminist language, therefore, has the onerous duty of exploding the lazy habit of mind that the world has sluggishly continued to wear for comfort and perhaps for a kind of security. The eminent linguistician George Steiner refers to this exercise: "The idea that the coding and transmission of ordered information is crucial to the definition of man is now focal". (Steiner, 1972: 2) "Now we have to consider", he continues,

> "The image of the human person as uniquely related to the act of speech, to the Logos." (Ibid: vii) Earlier than Steiner, Ronald Barthes provided the insight to the perplexing dilemma of having to work within the conventions of language in order to break the trammels of convention. This is an inescapable problem of the revolutionary in culture. Barthes talks of this double postulation in language:
>
> There is the impetus of a break and the impetus of a coming to power, there is the very shape of every revolutionary situation. The fundamental ambiguity is that Revolution must of necessity borrow from what it wants to destroy, the very image of what it wants to possess. (Barthes, 1968: 87)

Feminism should leap forward with a language that matches its content, to give a knowledge that is in advance of the information in the present.

How do feminists then construct or reconstruct their reality? One way would seem to come from the group identity that comes with the 'new' knowledge which does not fall in line with the common expectations of society. Any investigative enquiry at this hour of political compromise and sycophancy earns the phrase of 'radical scholarship' if not that of a downright 'subversive activity'. Feminists reaping a crop of investigations soon discover the obstinate precipitates in the level of language, holding out elements that have been misappropriated by the larger, patriarchal culture, otherwise known as "mainstream" culture. Therefore, Alicia Ostriker, quoting Claudine Herriman ('valuese de language') rightly says that

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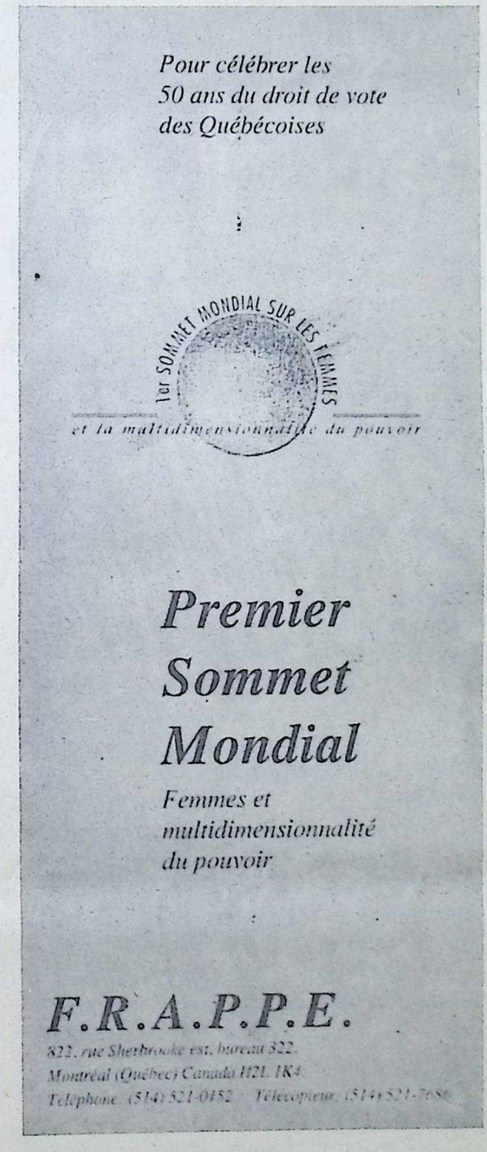
a woman should now be "a thief of language", that is, "She must steal the words back, redefine them to include her experience. She is building her own house of words now where she will finally be at home." (Ostricker, 1979: 6-10).

Feminist language has to do with the reality of the lives of women. Actually, it throws up a whole set of experiences that have nothing new in them and can, in fact, even merit the censure of 'over-language, the turn of phrases and the new colouring taken by words in today's climate. Herein lies the paradox that sets a spark by rubbing a time-wearied experience of a woman against a new way of recording a protest. Jean Bethke Elshtain has a clue to this paradox when she takes up language as something that carries a meaning along with its truth, "as the articulation of a coherent logos of female experience." This, she explains, is essentially because, "As with the Western tradition of political thought, contemporary feminism is alive with competing ways of seeing and contrasting images of public and private realities." (Elshtain, 1981: 297)

Feminist discourse, and what has now come to be called 'feminist criticism' has given women a woman's world. It has also created an alternate female tradition. It has to further develop a new hermeneutics with a strong critical foundation. The usual charge of 'ghettoization' can be preempted by not projecting this new knowledge about the reality of women's lives as narrow in scope, but by using the private and public realities of their lives to generate in effect an active dialectic between the self and the non-self. Relatively perhaps, but refreshingly free of dogma, feminist literary criticism for example, has functioned as an intelligent documentation recording obstinate male structures of power, and obliquely, the dominant ideology of male power.

To be sure, women have been in political engagement with the patriarchal system all the time for it constitutes the contradictory reality of their lives. And this, both inside her home and in the world outside, which is very like an extended family. Kate Millett puts it succinctly" "Patriarchy's chief institution is a family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with a larger society: a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole." (33). She also traces the larger perspective of this system. It has now come to stay as a culture in itself and practising feminists have the onerous task of exorcizing the patriarchal consciousness. Elizabeth A. Meese's hope for a positive direction deserves to be shared by every one here: "Because we have been culturally constituted as the 'Other', we have the potential as a group or 'class' for disloyalty... We are the linguistic and conceptual captives of a phallocentric economy that depends upon our very captivity for survival, just as, in many respects, we have been led to depend upon it." (Meese, 1986: 147).

To rebel against this patriarchal system is not just difficult but most complicated because women have to pick their way through a net-work of unavoidable relationships of various kinds with men—filial, marital, professional, social, kinship and blood ties. It is not that we tend to get confused by the situation, but the situation in itself is so nebulous and contradictory that it contains germs of confusion within itself. In spite of this, women



have been wounding friendship and shaking faith for some three or four decades now and furtively perhaps in the earlier times. This however is hitting us in return, with the backlash of a crude empiricism that has evolved from the activities of other disciplines, many of which are sadly reduced to case-studies or cold figures of statistics. Painful discoveries have surfaced in the wake of this empiricism, One such discovery being the low self-esteem in which women generally hold themselves, which more than matches the inferiority imposed on them by patriarchy. Naturally, this invalidates the right they have earned so far, be they legal, constitutional, professional or whatever. It only goes to prove that women cannot be shaped by rights alone, that they would have to continuously and assiduously generate ideas with creative energy and with a language that expresses this energy. This could gradually change society's ideas about women.

Any enlightened woman's conflict with society begins, ends and runs through the whole gamut of sexism, rampant in a society which has universalized it to a point of 'normalcy'. And the woman knows that the structural subordination of women cuts right through all the distinctions of class, education (and in India, this thing called 'caste') depriving her of her basic humanity, reducing her to a non-person. If needed 'biology is destiny' for her in this errant society, no wonder then that she is always short-changed for her just share of social and economic benefits. Still less wonder then, that the very concept of 'androgyny' comes through to the society at large as something outrageously egalitarian and unwarranted. Even in India, where androgyny is accepted in Hindu mythology (the dominant religion in secular India) and is frozen visibly in iconographic representations (in sculptures and paintings), society yet smirks at the very idea, even if it is advanced in intellectual, artistic and qualitative terms. On a more pragmatic level, it is rejected, even if the idea is advanced only to help free the human personality from sex stereotyping, from the culturally imposed definites of masculinity and femininity, that is even androgyny is advanced simply for improved mental health.

Traditions then, die hard. Not the least because they come with a perplexing ambivalence. For traditions promise stability, shape, distinctness and identity even as they threaten to plane down all growth and development that may take a subversive route. In India, this phenomenon we call religions has a staying power even in the most modern and scientific and secular contexts. If one were to trace the English word 'religion' to its Latin root *religio* (which means 'to bind'), it is a continuing force that binds people in a kinship even as it binds them to God. More than being a man-made establishment or structure, religion has an abiding presence as a natural law, or a divine order that one hesitates to defy. The force of religion continues to live in modern, secular India and the Hindu India, the Christian India or the Muslim India is frankly patriarchal, all in the name of religion.

It tends to concede modern, legal, constitutional rights as concessions, or as charity, rather than as convictions backed as religion. Not wanting to lose their rightful place in religious status, the

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Indian women would ideally like to be seen as equally Hindu/Christian/Muslim as their male counterparts and not in any way 'less' than the men in the spiritual realm. Consequently, the women have now learnt to live poised with their own ambiguity. Diana L. Eck and Devaki Jain elucidate the "frightening yet influential" effect of religion on human nature and suggest finally that "We must find a way into religion or out of it, because traditions of religion are powerful and because women's lives are interwoven with them." (Eck and Jain, 1956: 255) The world has witnessed one physical manifestation of this in the 'purdah' system, the custom of women veiling the face and the body, as recommended by the religion of Islam. Fatima Mernissi gives an explanation: "Veiling goes together with a key attribute, modesty, and is the expression of the spatial confinement of women. Spatial confinement is the physical expression of women's exclusion from the public sphere, the sphere precisely of knowledge and power. This explains why Muslim Conservative activists, manipulating Islam as a disciplinary framework for their claim to guide and decide for their supporters, will insist on women's modesty."—"Feminity as Subversion: Reflections on the Muslim concept of *Nushuz*". (Eck & Jain, 1986: 93)

Failure to resist this phallocentric universe which practise the subtle politics of exclusion, can well be misconstrued as a silent connivance and complicity on the part of women. The true feminist political thinker resist the politics of exclusion and the politics of silencing the women by first locating the woman as both the subject of political and social enquiry as well as an object of enquiry and as an active agent of social and political change and transformation. The dynamics involved in the leap of "The Personal is Political" should not be allowed to be consumed by a capitalist patriarchy. Feminist thinkers of all schools—Radical. Marxist, Liberal and Psychoanalytic—are agreed upon this one point: that the individualized, atomised experience of women have to be brought into the open and that the boundaries of the private and the public ought to be modified, if one has to arrive upon a definition of woman. Instead of relegating a private experience to the whispered confines of a female space, women should vocalize and articulate the areas of trouble. It is here that we see a structured, systematic choking of the freedom of female speech even in countries that ostensibly practise the most democratic and egalitarian political values. A persecutive 'silence' is desired of women since the Greeks to now. Nannerl O. Keohane sums it up lucidly: "Speech, discourse and voice have been effective metaphors for political activity since the Greeks. From Plato's creation of a 'city of speech' in *The Republic*, through the power of the Hobbesian sovereign as the power of naming and controlling words, to Hannah Arendt's contemporary definition of speech as the central activity in fully human life, speech has been a central motif in human public life. In this context, the durable association of women and silence is especially revealing." (Keohane, 1981: 92).

The interdiction of silence has to be overthrown by a fresh, positive articulation of the female consciousness by a language than can actively compete with the male consciousness at large, often mistaken to be 'mainstream' or 'general humanity'. History shows that a female voice has always been taken to be intrusive, and conversely, their silence is associated with 'modesty' (Remember how approvingly Arstotle quoted Sophocles? "A modest silence is a woman's crown." Politics, Book I (1260a) (The word for crown here is kosmon') This prescriptive silence was also tacitly establishes at every step in work places, institutions and within homes and all places which disregard and devalue women's opinions and ideas and trivialize their ideals and feelings till they are group-marginalized. For instance, the Tamil stereotype of such a woman lives in the cliched Tamil idiom: "She's so quiet one can't tell where she is.'

It was left to the scathing brilliance of a Kate Millett to expound the much romanticized/much vulgarized force called 'sex' as something highly charged with political implications and consequences, in which concepts of power and domination play out their ruthless games. Millett's *Sexual Politics* took up the much neglected political aspect of sex, where the author here lays bare the darkest and most pernicious of motives lurking in the language of the most warped talents, i.e., in the well-received works of male writers like D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, and Jean Genet, all of who bleach under Millett's merciless expose. The damage has been done. It has had crippling, far-reaching consequences in terms of minds that has been influenced, attitudes twisted, paranoid wishes nourished and it is from the ashes of these that feminist language has had to rise.

Percolating to power-patterns in institutions, work-places, social ambits and within homes, sexual politics has both perpetuated and successfully sustained the infantalization of women, regardless of her class, educational or professional status. Many of us have a first-hand experience of how a working woman has to meet with male approval for an advancement of her career, or in some cases, for even holding on to the job she has got. This intimidates some women to huddle together and suffer the minority status of a marginalised existence, where they are just *used*. They find themselves in a man-centred world with male-generated notions about sex and are often bewildered by the proliferation of postulates regarding sex—all from a single, male point of view—projected by patriarchy. That sex is an act monopolised and enjoyed by men (even though it takes two to have sex); that the male is the dominant 'active' member, with the female in a position of 'submission' and 'surrender' in dumb passivity; or that sex is used somehow to 'punish' the female, that it is, in fact, an expression, an act of violence against the female, make no mistake, there is no love, . . .they belabour the point to a point of desperate absurdity.

So convinced is the average male about the superiority of his sexual prowess that the next natural step for the men is to make ridiculous sexual hierarchies on their own which seek to cut across barriers of economic, educational, social or class superiority. According to man, he can humble woman by his ultimate weapon, his "manhood' so-called. "Should this vanity be offended, he may contemplate more violent methods," says Millett, arguing that "Incidents from life (bullying, obscene or hostile remarks) are probably another psychological gesture of ascendancy. Both convey more hope than reality." (36) D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is an example of this absurdity. It is a novel which has had a long innings, thanks to the censoring and banning, that stimulated a lot of prurient interest in the book.

Millett traces the three phases of sexual fantasy by male writers. i) the realistic and revolutionary beginning with Engels and Mill, ii) the sentimental and chivalrous triggered by Ruskin's "Of Queen's Gardens", and iii) "The School of Fantasy", citing the male writers just mentioned in the paper. It is now for women-and men-"to free humanity from the tyranny of sexual-social category" suggests Millet, "and in the process, bring us all a great deal closer to humanity," (363), advocating "a permis-

LAKSHMI KANNAN (KAAVERI), INDE/INDIA

LF LANGAGE FEMINISTE: ATTISER UNE ENERGIE REGENERATRICE
Le pouvoir du langage féministe est chargé d'une connaissance transformatrice émanant d'un stimuli heuristique. Le pouvoir du langage en tant qu'outil de développement d'une logique féministe irrésistible.

FEMINIST LANGUAGE: HONING A REGENERATIVE ENERGY
The power of the feminist language is loaded with a transformative knowledge arising from a heuristic stimulus. The power of language as a tool, evolving a compelling logic of feminism.

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sible single standard of sexual freedom" for a truly revolutionary change (62). Today we are seeing that taking shape. Women have, at least reclaimed their right to love themselves; they have reclaimed their right to their own bodies and now they are sexual in their own right, after having been alienated from their own bodies and allowed themselves to be "occupied territory". Now a woman does not necessarily need a man to 'complete' her. All these observations may be new to the old furniture of social thinking, but women have arrived.

The power of feminist language could emanate from the compelling logic of feminism itself. Let us recall a paradigm that Millett underscored for us: "Just as the personal is political, politics is power. Because power is everywhere, so is politics." (25) Along with our moral sentiments, our political imagination must awaken in us as a 'public responsibility'. We must generate political thinking or evolve a mode of political thinking that would counter the patriarchal structures of thought which are cleverly and jealously guarded, without being overly 'political' in intention. One suspects that the going would be political—all the way down. For women, be they professionals, artists, writers or from the active labour force, should be empowered by their language, and *use* this power to challenge the very language of patriarchy.

Dale Spender points out that "The difference between the feminist model and the patriarchal model is in essence political and it has been a political manoeuvre on the part of educationists to keep the feminist forces out of education." (Spender, 1981:170) Spender also draws our attention to how women who have made their politics (of feminism) known, have a slender chance of being absorbed in influential positions or of being offered permanent appointments as men in power scrupulously avoid them. Citing the paper of her colleague, she says: "According to Dorothy Smith, such women have minimum 'voting power': they can endorse, but not 'veto." (Smith, 1978: 160) There is power, entwined with the clout of money, the two main things most men thirst for. All paradigms emanating from this have come to assume a working ethics of a very specious kind. Women are now suffering from a phenomenon closely akin to racism, says Kirsten Amundsen, rightly. It closely follows the definition outlined by her in "Institutional Sexism": "That term (racism) has come to mean a system of social, political, and psychological pressures that tends to suppress a group with certain psychological pressures that tends to suppress a group with certain biologically determined characteristics. A suppression that goes beyond or is contrary to normal divisions of class." (Amundsen, 1977:100)

Patriarchy teems with a specious kind of 'ethics' that parades under 'normalcy'. Feminist language can combat this when it is empowered with a compelling logic for its own case. It is the kind of logic that would necessarily come with the power of a transformative knowledge, that is, a knowledge based on experience, truth and meaning. A knowledge that is arrived upon by drawing out the force of truth. By letting this truth penetrate the psyche stingingly, painfully. Because feminist language today is addressing itself to a world of deadened sensibilities, to a world that has come to 'normalise' and 'legitimize' its injustices and atrocities on women, to a world that has grown extremely insensitive to the problems of women. At this point in time, feminist discourse, or feminist creative text, has to be strong enough to carry with it what Michele Foucault terms aptly as "a new politics of truth". Says Foucault: "The essential political problem for the intellectual is. . .that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousness—or what is in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth." (Foucault, 1980:133). It might be helpful to note how truth cuts its way through a mesh of established hegemony: "Truth holds no independent relationship to systems of power. It results from or is coincident with the very power that inhabits knowledge itself. It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power), but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economical and cultural within which it operates at the present time." (133). For the psychologist Wolfgang Loch too, truth is "a dynamic, social search for transformative and reconstructive knowledge", to be used for political action and political discourse.

It is the force of this purgatorial truth that has been subtly withheld from women. In turn, women have themselves the truth of their own existence, or rather, the reality of their lives. Indoctrinated with the idea of falsifying their pain and intimidation, schooled into accepting a subservient status, the women have grown into a numbness that comes with the fraudulent 'normalcy'. Amongst other damages, it has resulted in the intellectual infantalisation of women. It has also brought about a wariness regarding women writers who produce powerful, iconoclastic texts. One could take a look at the quality of language in the prose of two writers who write fiction in Hindi, Rajee Seth and Kusum Kumar. There is a surge of energy held by the central force of a will, a love for life as expressed by Vasudha, the young widow in the award -winning novel Tat-Sam by Rajee Seth: "I feel like someone is inside me. She accosts me and in my race against time paces me ahead. She who is life-struck, irrepressible and is possessed of the whim of sometimes judging me as your companion, she who sees everything differently! All the triumphs and the losses. . . But motion is motion, an incorrigible awakening. Our feet in coaxing motion must learn the power of motion. They learn about what cannot be contained. What will break out and cross over motion, which when it finds things in the way simply moves on: to where they are not. To something else—a passion, a place, or a penchant.

One suddenly sees that when one awakens, paths unfold everywhere. Our reach around us ceases. The lust for life, when it surges cannot fold into just another person. It chooses. Picks for itself the ground beneath its feet and the succour for its soul." (Translated from the original Hindi by Jasjit Purewal).

The sheer truth and logic of her argument strike down our defences. Then again, in the searing pungency of the language in the novel *Hiraman High School* by Kusum Kumar, Pagla, the crazy man of a small town, stings our conscience into a wakefulness The lines roll out in a rhythmic beat that earns for them a recall value: "Pagla was his father's son too. . .He kept on wagging his dirty tongue. He was holding forth, giving a name for each one of them. . .you jackets!. . .You pockets!. . .Lockets!. . .Rockets!. . . Why do I see those peons and clerks putting so much pressure on the wheels of their cycle? Why, why the hell don't the wheels burst in front of everybody. . .? And here, we the white ants turn to god so shamelessly. . .Ask them. . .ask them what they do with their Masters, their plasters and their Ph.Ds. . .? Mask them. . .mask them soon or they'd be caught covering up their eyes, their eyes. . .Catch them. . .catch them in their night suits and electric loops. . .Cut them. . .cut them into pieces.

This may not be history unfolding before my eyes, but this bus here, plying for the state tourism, marks out the routes and roads to all the classic lies. . .all those 'high values'. 'Oh-so-noble nuances', 'the true stances' and the best performances." (Translated from the original Hindi by the author) Knowledge produced in our society has been produced by men. . .They have *men's studies* (the academic curriculum) for, by not acknowledging that they are presenting only the explanations of *men*, they have 'passed off' this knowledge as human knowledge. Women have been excluded as the producers of knowledge and as the subjects of knowledge, for men have often made their own knowledge and their own sex, representative of humanity." The significant contribution of feminism so far has been the earnest effort to establish women as autonomous human beings. This has blown the lid off the tacit conspiracy of silence regarding the atrocities on women in addition to giving visibility to the hitherto faded, fading existence of women.

Feminist language then has to whip up an active, political vocabulary, by a braving investiga-

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tive intelligentsia. And for that, it has to contend with the living structures of power. We would have to go beyond the point of taking language as a vehicle of communication, as semantics, or as words clothing the nakedness of thoughts. The time has come for us to consolidate the knowledge that has been shored up by feminism.

It has shown up language as a phenomenon that penetrates into deep structures of social and political consequence. It dates back to the most basic social structures. Let us, for a moment, analyze the finding of Jean Bethke Elshtain: "Any society beyond the most primitive contains an array of associations, institutions, structures and relationships organized to various purposes. . .not surprisingly our political vocabulary resonates with terms whose meanings are drawn from our earliest social relationships with families." (128)

The main problem, as I see it, is one of bringing the language of women onto a political forum, the forum of public rhetoric. Language should stimulate far-reaching consequences. Feminism, to be sure, is already doing it, but it ought to do a lot more. Effectively. For that, the first step would be to move from the lucidity of the inter-personal to the eloquently rhetorical.

We need to concentrate more on the social functions of language and on the way language effects communicative behaviours and some socio-cultural purposes. To briefly enumerate the political complications as well as consequences that follow the choice of a particular language used in India. It has fourteen developed languages in active use, with each of them enjoying a full constitutional status. Amongst these, one particular language or two often tends to dominate the community as a supra-dialectical norm, cutting across regional barriers. English and Hindi serve this purpose in multi-lingual groups. Since language *is* central to the development of a modern outlook, any important discourse in English and Hindi needs to be translated and re-interpreted in the regional vernacular that functions within a particular state. Feminist language has to percolate to this level of the vernacular, if it has to enjoy far-reaching, long-range benefits. But first, the barrier between the elite and the masses has to be reduced, if not dissolved completely. English effects a certain modernization while the vernacular often tends to pull back from an ingrained regressiveness. Feminist language has to join the world community of increasingly inter-translatable languages. The problem with the educated Indian today is that she/he often feels a sharp separation between the language of thought and the language of emotion, which is her/his own mother-tongue used at home. Also, languages in India have become oblique symbols of group identity. Inter-translatability of messages here becomes an urgent necessity. Translations can effectively enlarge linguistic communities, that is, like-minded groups of people in sympathy with their mutual cause.

In as much as language has been easily accommodating proverbs from times immemorial, it now has to bring a fresh knowledge that is vigilant in re-assessing proverbs that have earned a spurious kind of veracity by usage. Holding a smug, pragmatic wisdom snugly against women. Many of them are simply cruel jokes, or jokes in downright bad taste. And yet, they cannot be dismissed lightly as just 'amusing proverbs' for they unmistakably represent a societal attitude. Albert Cook elucidates how a proverb "actually embodies a number of presuppositions," for, he says, "A proverb is a speech act. Even an utterance so simple and seemingly detached from a specific context as a proverb may reflect nothing less than that of the whole social matrix that uses it." (Cook, 1980:211)

Both women and men have been tutored to receive proverbs with a passivity that can border on apathy. This has a crippling effect on women in particular, for they are already inhibited in their use of language and are restricted by all kinds of rules relating to 'discretion' and 'decorum'. Also, Indian women are discouraged from using a language that is expressive of their emotion and this nearly chokes them off. Veena Das, a distinguished sociologist, explains that women "must never use words which make emotions explicit, reveal the tensions of a situation or subvert the authority of the ordering principles of language and law, especially in domains that include relations between men and women." (Das, Ed. Chanana, 1988: 198)

Language then, liberates us as much as it enslaves us. We work out our area of creative freedom between the unlimited number of messages and the vehicles of expression on the one hand, the conventional regulations of some thoughts on the other. Within this flux, we work out our salvation. Feminism that reaches us in the cool, analytical discourse in disciplines like sociology has planed down much of the vitality of the language, often giving a bland turn to a living experience. Creative texts should revitalize messages. Language reaches out to a world outside and it is here that it makes a meaningful contact with the other. It is here that the self meets the non-self. Says George Steiner: "Speech is the systole and the diastole of sustained being: it gives inward and outward proof." The potency of feminist language springs from the life-blood of lived experience, feminist language cradles within itself a heuristic, transformative knowledge. It comes with a regenerative energy, a vitality that establishes the compelling logic of feminism. In every way, feminist language takes off in an independent direction, away from the mainstream language that is sexist and bristles with ingrained prejudices against women. Bearing the force of sheer truth, it is a kind of a language that can hope to move well beyond the triteness of the feminist posture, at this point in time. Any language of truth can, in fact, possess the earth.

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KARNAD PLAYS WITH A COBRA

Rajinder Paul

NAGA MANDALA—PLAY WITH A COBRA

By Girish Karnad (Translated from the original by the author)

Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 44, Rs 35.00

Naga-Mandala, the latest play by Girish Karnad, has an ambiguous title in English: 'Play with a Cobra'. It is a play where a Cobra plays the lover and proves to be better behaved than his human counterpart who is as insensitive a husband as we read about in bad tales. Karnad in fact weaves two Kannada folk tales into this play—as is his wont, like the art he practised in *Hayavadana*, the tragic story of Padmini and the somewhat droll story of the princess who fell in love with a horse and gave birth to a half-man-half-horse, Hayavadana.

In the prologue to *Naga-Mandala* there is the story of Flames which have little use in the houses when the inhabitants want darkness around. One by one the Flames gather at an old dilapidated building to exchange notes. They relate and share their experiences like those extraordinary dolls that Karnad presented in *Hayavadana*. Apart from that the lamps also save a precious life—that of the playwright—who has been foretold that he would die if he doesn't keep awake for one whole night. The curse is the result of his having subjected his audience to soporific boredom. Here is the opportunity for a playwright to make amends, to test his interest, unegoistically, in someone else's tale, to serve his own interest and that of the audience with a tinge of irony and wry humour—an area in which a Karnad is a sophisticate.

The story that the lamps unfold is that of Rani who is brought to live in a lonely house by a husband who is playing games with a mistress. Perhaps the mistress is a bad cook or has no time for these lowly chores; he comes back to Rani for meals and goes back to the mistress after his allotted lunch break.

Karnad introduces in these comings and goings of the husband, a female Tiresias of sorts—a village woman, old and blind, who rides piggyback on her obedient son to travel around and enquire after the new bride in the village. She gives the rejected wife love roots, the ones she herself has used to acquire a groom many years ago. The dosage is also prescribed. The small root is just enough to give the husband a blackout and consequently a scowl. The blind woman, Kurudavva, eggs on the wife to mix the stronger root into the lunch time curry. Rani does so, the curry turns so fiendishly red that it scares her into throwing it away into the anthill where the Cobra laps it up and rises to the occasion.

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Naga-Mandala *has been variously interpreted as something between illusion and reality, a blurring of lines as it were, where our desires take on fantastical shapes.*

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Here the tale takes on all kinds of meanings. The King Cobra taking on the face and mantle of the husband starts visiting Rani at night. Rani thinks it is her newly reformed husband. So she plays the coy and beloved wife. In the morning the husband comes back for meals and shows no difference in his mistreatment of Rani. Rani mildly questions this when the time comes in the night for love, and the lover (Naga) like all knowing lovers, replies without really answering her question and smothers her inquisitiveness with more love. The play continues—the husband brings a dog and then a mongoose to ward off the intruding Kurudavva. Naga has his duels with the sentries and keeps on visiting Rani in the night. Rani duly becomes pregnant and informs her husband likewise. Husband calls her names, swears in front of the village elders that he had not touched her. Nobody asks why he has not done so—it being a man's prerogative as it were, and the wretched wife is obliged to go through a chastity test or confess. Naga asks her to go through the Cobra test, i.e. tell the villagers she will put her hand in the Cobra pit. If the Cobra doesn't bite her she is chaste, otherwise she is dead anyway—

Rani goes to the anthill, plunges her hand into it and pulls the Cobra out.

Rani: Since coming to this village, I have held by this hand, only two—My husband—And this Cobra. Yes, my husband and this King Cobra. Except for these two, I have not touched anyone of the male sex. Nor have I allowed any other male to touch me, If I lie, let the Cobra bite me. (*The Cobra slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head. The crowd gasps. The Cobra sways its hood gently for a while, then becomes docile and moves over her shoulder like a garland—Rani stares uncomprehending as the Cobra slips back into the anthill. There are hosannas and cheers from the crowd.* (pp. 39)

Girish Karnad

"She is not a woman. She is a Divine Being.—Indeed, a Goddess—!" The villagers ask the husband to consider it his fortune that he is married to a *Devi*. He willingly asks her forgiveness.

So, as the story tells us, Rani gets everything, her husband and her child. Even the husband's concubine, who wants to expiate her sins by drawing water for Rani from the village well. It is a nice fairy tale, well, almost. A faithful wife striving for her husband and her ultimate triumph in bringing her husband to her hearth, like in those Hindi films which use incredible means to serve us a wholesome feast of our chaste and faithful womanhood and their power. *Naga-Mandala* doesn't end here. There's a little more to it, lest we forget our lover friend who has an existentialist existence to cope with, to say the least, for a rebel who has been robbed of his cause.

As the wife returns to her husband's legitimate bed, Naga lies there in his anthill thinking of Rani. He knows he has given her everything. And there she is sleeping cosily in her husband's arms not even thinking of the time she had with him. Should he dig his fangs into her and make her his own or kill her husband. He says, "No I can't. My love has stitched up my lips. Pulled out my fangs. Torn out my sac of poison... Yes this King Cobra is now no better than a grass snake.... And I had forgotten that. I thought I could become human. Turn into my own creation. No! her thighs, her bosom, her lips are for one who is forever a man. I shed my own skin every season." (pp. 42)

Once again Karnad brings up the theme of incompleteness. Hayavadana became full horse because he didn't ask to become a human being. Padmini loses both head and body, Devadutta and Kapila—in her dare-devilling with the help of Kali for human perfection—a contradiction in terms. Here Naga aspires to, or at least has tasted human love. He can therefore now neither be Cobra nor become man. I don't know what happened to the original serpent after he bit Eve, but we certainly know the course our Naga takes here. Like a true lover, who will not disclose his beloved's letters or intimate secrets, he decides to commit suicide by entering her tresses. Rani, who realizes the truth by now, extracts a promise from her husband that every year this day, their son would perform *Shraadhha* and that when they cremate the snake,

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the son would light the pyre.

What could be Karnad's concern in this round little tale? A tale which by modern norms of discontent and conflicts, revelation and skin-peeling for truth, lacks a sting or two in the end. It reads a bit like a *pattivrata's* tale often told, on the day of *Karvachauth*, the annual ritual of fasting that north Indian wives perform for their husband's long life.

In our earlier encounters with Karnad's protagonists almost all of them came to grief for their daring to do or to aspire to do more. Puru in *Yayati*, Tughlak in *Tughlak* or Padmini in *Hayavadana* who has to perform sati in the end, as, by choice or default, she lived with two husbands. In *Anjumallige* Yamini becomes paranoid in search of her illicit lover. Yet Rani lives here, while Naga commits suicide. Has Naga dared more than Rani? What would Rani tell her child? Would she dare tell him who his father was? Karnad doesn't want to go beyond that, like the irrepressible Greek Oedipus whose search for truth brought ruination to himself. Karnad seems to echo Eliot! 'Mankind cannot face too much reality.'

The story tells us that Rani would have known when her husband would have taken her for the first time after the Cobra test, because no two men make love alike. Whether she would treat the Naga story as a pleasant dream or a bad one is unimportant here as both have to be forgotten. A loverly secret which will go with her to the grave.

In *The Lover* by Pinter, Sarah and Richard and wife, take on different identities in the afternoon, as if when they meet surreptitiously like lovers away from their respective spouses, they make up for the lack of communication or ennui that sets in when love turns into duty. Pinter devises for his lovers the playful game of name-changing and role-changing to bring out the fun, passion, and stakes of illicit love. *Naga-Mandala* also reminds me, oddly, of Truman Capote's short story *House of Flowers*, where Capote mixes fantasy and realism in the tale of Otillie who is left tied to a tree in the end.

But Karnad takes no chances—he uses both his hands for forehand as well as back- hand strokes. Structurally there is very little to fault in Karnad. He is almost the Walter Pater of drama. He has woven into *Naga–Mandala* besides the stories of Flames and that of Rani, a third one which by design disappears into thin air. The old, blind woman Kurudavva, has a son Kapanna who acts as her staff and transport. Marquez-like, he has a thing going with an otherworldly creature. When Rani is going through the Cobra test, the old woman is mad with grief at her son having disappeared. Karnad doesn't pursue this strand to its logical end. It is anybody's guess how the spirits, as poetic justice, get their own back with the old woman who interfered and provided the roots to tame the husband and was ultimately the cause of King Cobra's death.

Naga-Mandala has been variously interpreted as something between illusion and reality, a blurring of lines as it were, where our desires take on fantastical shapes. Neelam Mansingh Choudhury, the director who brought the Punjabi version of the original to Delhi under the title of *Naga-Chhaya*,

thinks the theme is that of "transformation and the duality of human experiences and existence. The leit-motif is the image of the snake that is part metaphor, part reality, part idea and energy."

Hayavadana also had a fantastic story at a time when magic realism or whatever the current phrases, was not in vogue. Karnad's concerns with *Naga-Mandala* I don't think have undergone a sea change; they still are the same as they were in his earlier plays. Here Naga in a typical theatrical metaphor takes on the form of the husband to justify Rani's innocence in this complicity. Karnad doesn't pursue Rani's experience to present her with a conundrum. He only allows Naga, the outsider, to make love for the last time, to her tresses, and do harakiri thereafter and let sleeping dogs lie. Sometimes the avoidance of an answer or telling of a lie may be the only route to peace.

But drama is not peace. Nor do I suppose one needs to take it as a palliative. Karnad's plays are nice little tragedies—bitter medicines with sugar coating of sorts; whether they create the right rasa or catharsis. I shall not judge what I do know is that they can certainly be treated at two levels—cerebral and or visual.

I've seen several productions of *Hayavadana*. The first one was a dainty folk tale set like a fairy tale among the foliage, which B V Karanth presented in Delhi. His Padmini was led into situations of having to choose between Devdutta and Kapila rather than being the protagonist herself. The in a recent production Karanth used an unbecoming Padmini in which the only logical conclusion of the mutual killing of Devdutta and Kapila would be that neither of them was keen to live with her.

Satyadev Dubey, who reacts to Karnad's plays cerebrally, presented the most fetching Padmini in Sunila Pradhan, whose eroticism on stage, in her gait and voice, was worth killing rivals for.

Naga-Mandala is an illustrative play, and I have it on the authority of one who has seen its first production in Kannada by Shanker Nag, that there the director used puppets and mountain background in the open to create an aura of MGM grandeur, as it were, where the very act of participation is not just the actors' body or voice but the subterfuges and frills that costumes and props create towards composite magic.

Neelam Mansingh Choudhury in a way opts for a less illustrative production, but it is illustrative all the same. She introduces her current interest in the Punjabi folk form of *Naqal*, in which male actors do female impersonation—the *bhands* and eunuchs—underlining that perhaps most life is impersonation after all and theatre all the more so. Sometimes the simplicity with which she transforms the frame of the husband into Naga by draping around a piece of cloth in snake colour is stunning, though at times the miming of some of the details—whether of knocking at the door or of the husband returning in the evening after having made an exit in the morning, taxes the imagination, and breaks the magic unnecessarily.

Surjit Patar's translation is very good but it is a production in which straight dialogues have been translated into songs for the convenience of the form—like pruning the feet to fit Cindrella's shoes.

Naga-Mandala has come about after a gap of nearly two decades. The in-between *Anjumallige* has yet to get a major production. One would like to see a production of *Naga-Mandala* in which the core of the play—the cerebral part of it—gets highlighted and the folk trimmings, the illustrative part, gets pushed into background. ❑

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Wine, Women and Wisdom

Anuradha Marwah Roy

DELHI—A NOVEL
by Khushwant Singh
Viking, 1989, pp . 391, Rs. 150.00

Khushwant Singh is a name associated with a certain kind of journalism—the kind best represented by his very own logo. Put on the electric bulb and what does one see! A dapper pen and paper in hand surrounded by various objects—a bottle of scotch, pictures of nude women and in the background a pile of books,serious business this time, rising above his head. Wine, women and wisdom and a promise of communicating the mysteries of all three. The message beamed by the bulb could not have been more explicit. In the rather colourless world of serious journalism the persona assumed by Khushwant Singh has been a masterstroke. It has the right proportion of mischief and intellect. His writing too is consistent with the persona, more often than not keeping the promise of readability. Once in a while when the salacious content becomes too overbearing the reader is presented with a choice—either to be indulgent and laugh off his pecadillos as those of a dirty but wise old man or to be strait-laced and dismiss his writing as soft-porn. Responses to *Delhi A Novel* have also tended to border on both extremes because the salacious content is rather pronounced in it. It starts with the jacket, designed perhaps too literally from descriptions within the novel. An old king from his royal perch eyes a lovely, young damsel in all her pristine glory—rounded buttocks and firm breasts, a phrase that recurs too many times even in the space of 391 pages. It is not the existence of the phrase that is worrying ultimately, it is its divorce from the serious stuff of writing and knowing. And Khushwant Singh's logo makes this distinction rather starkly. On the one hand is a pile of books that look as if they mean business and on the other is pornography. In the novel too there is the serious stuff of running the affairs of the state, maintaining or tilting the communal balance, building the city of Delhi, making money and there is the frivolous stuff of seductive thighs parting again and again. It is this artificial schism that makes the novel dissatisfying. I propose to discuss in some detail how it is the marginality and not centrality of women/sex in Khushwant Singh's scheme of things that makes the novel incomplete and weak.

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Khushwant Singh's sensibility seems to be primarily sensual. As the novel is replete with descriptions of the city, the reader gets a feel of the place as he reads on. Consider this visual delight

for instance:

> I went out into the drizzle again toward the Bara Gumbad mosque built by Sikander Lodhi. Beautiful dome! Exactly like the bosom of Kamala, the woman from the south, the land of coconuts: firmly rounded, with its taut nipple poking the sky. I walked round the mosque, sat on a dilapidated grave and examined the Sheesh Gumbad which was a few metres away. Its dome was a little less wanton. The surrounding frills of coloured tiles which looked like lace brassieres in the daytime were not visible in the grey moonlight.

Yet the situation is never only visual. Singh gives the smell and odours of Delhi with equal fidelity whether they are those of peasants' shit or thousands of seasonal flowers. His is a sensibility borne out of participation with the elements rather like that of Nihal Singh's in the novel. Nihal Singh is a common sikh soldier in the British army sent to quell the mutineers. Along with his friends he catches fireflies and sticks them in his beard till it sparkles and then dances the bhangra in the rain. When he sees a peacock dance the following morning he experiences an Epiphany.

The structure of the novel is not very complex. Short narratives put in the mouths of historical personages alternate with the protagonist's own narration of his life in modern Delhi. The imaginative recapitulation of history thus spans around six hundred years. Though sensual in nature the narrations are not unevaluative. The above mentioned Nihal Singh's narrative, the narrative of the member of a contractor's family who along with Luytens built New Delhi and the protagonists' own recounting of the 1984 anti-sikh riots are telling comments on the social structures of the times. Racial prejudice, feudal habits, political capitalization of the communal situation are remarked upon in authentic cadences. I cannot resist quoting from Nihal Singh's section. Nihal Singh is Hodson sahib's orderly—a blue-eyed native. Yet, at times he feels acutely the difference of the outlook between the races:

> I sat down on the wet ground and wept. These were the peacock-killing mother-fuckers we were fighting for. What do these *bunderlogs* know of the rain? Their women do not have the black hair to remind them of dark monsoon skies. Nor do they have large-rounded bosoms which would remind them of billowing white clouds. Their girls do not know how to make swings on mango trees and sing songs to the monsoon. Have you ever heard gor*alog* sing? I heard them in their church at Ambala: The memo screaming hee, hee, hoo, hoo; men braying *bhaw bhaw* like donkeys. How could they appreciate the *ragas* of rain and the dancing of peacocks?

Indeed the hair and bosom of the beloved may remind a poet of skies and clouds but surely something is amiss when a novelist sees women only sensually or only as a part of the landscape. Nadir Shah, Aurangazeb and even the doddering Bahadur Shah Zafar have their Noor Bai, Hira Bai and Zeenat Mahal to cavort with just as the commoner Nihal Singh had his clouds and peacocks. These maidservants to the monarch's pleasure as they proclaim themselves to be time and again do little else beside warm his bed. Could the monarch perceive no subversion in their behaviour? One longs for them to open their mouths, to just hint at the secret life they must have led. But like the rain and the clouds they are available and silent. Is this the typical male-fantasy?

It is not only the courtesans and the begum who can keep their counsel in the novel. Even the wife of a commoner Kayastha Mussadi Lal is mainly silent. Except for making herself unavailable sexually to her husband for a while she gives no other indication of her struggle to acclimatize herself to

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his Muslimization. Once she submits sexually she seems to encounter no other problems. She must have had neighbours and relatives. Where in the novel is the life in the kitchen and the mohalla that women lived?

Some of this incompleteness can be attributed to the structure of the novel and the fact that the speakers are mostly male. Yet, the alleged corruption of Aurangazeb's morals by Hira Bai did deserve more psychological tension than is allowed by the author. If Zeenat Mahal's father was rumoured to be conspiring with the enemy would not her relationship with Bahadur Shah Zafar been marked with something more significant than venison kebabs and aphrodisiac inspired love making?

It is only in 1857 that the women finds a voice in the novel. Predictably the narrative of the Anglo-Indian Alice Aldwell deals almost exclusively with her sexual adventures. Inspite of the tiring descriptions it is still a view from the inside of the precarious position of the Anglo-Indians in society. Also, perhaps it is the only portrait of a woman as being something else besides a sexual being. Alice is a mother, a victim of racial prejudice along with being a schemer and a woman of easy virtue.

The historical narratives are on the whole too phallocentric to be palatable. And the sexual descriptions which are far too many are so onesided as to be masturbations for the male fantasy. What Khushwant Singh has missed out completely is the relevance of sexual relationships. Even Meer Taqui Mer's infatuation with Qamar remains inexplicable because she is potrayed as a cardboard figure. The difficulties arising from the limitations of first person narratives could have been circumvented by making the narrative more self reflecting. Otherwise a counter-view could have been provided from the protagonists' side. As the narratives stand, the author's injecting of seminal fluid in historical facts seems to have generated no life. Instead of the protagonist holding a mirror to history, it is his own face that history seems to be reflecting. The protagonist's view of women in this day and age does not differ in quality from Aurangazeb's or Nadir Shah's. No woman gets by without bust and buttocks examined. We have here a roll call of various types—Lady JHT whose being a famous archaeologist makes little difference to the fact that she is flat-chested. Then there is a German stenographer who the protagonist seduced indifferently and an American missy-baba, the large hipped Georgine whom he fails to seduce. There is also the frustrated army-wife who startles him by exposing her perfect ebony-black bosom.

Above all, of course, there is the hijda—prostitute Bhagmati to whom the protagonist returns after whoring in foreign lands and in whose po marked visage he glimpses a simulacrum of h beloved Delhi. The kind of relationship that th protagonist develops with Bhagmati is explana tory of the point I am making. This relationshi has acute trouble getting out of the bedroom. It again a one-sided affair. Bhagmati is paid for he performance and the reader is never sure of wh else she is getting out of it. The disparity of educa tion and life-style makes sure that there is litt verbal communication between the two. All tha the reader guesses is that the protagonist is bette than her other patrons. Much as the protagonis enjoys her ministration he resents her gettin proprietal about him and does not bother to mas his irritability when there is no passion. How does she view him? What does she desire beside mangoes and cigarattes? What kind of life does she go back to the Lal Kuan? Nobody knows?

At the bitter end when the protagonist sees tha Delhi he loves going up in communal flames she is there mutely beside him unable to understand the cause of his stupor. There she is—neither Hindu nor Muslim, neither man nor woman, neither his past nor his future—a vacuity to him—old, ugly and asleep now emblematic of all the sex in the novel—sterile. ❑

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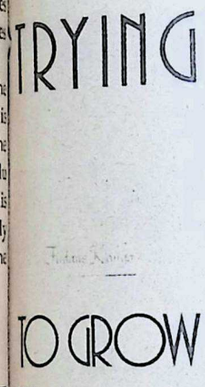
COMING TO TERMS

Partho Datta

TRYING TO GROW

By Firdaus Kanga

Ravi Dayal, Publisher, Delhi, 1990, Distributed by Orient Longman, Rs. 95.00



Firdaus Kanga's novel has finally arrived in these shores in Ravi Dayal's elegant hard-cover edition. Before I read the novel, the only thing I knew about middle-class Parsi life came from seeing two delightful films, Vijaya Mehta's *Pestonjee* and more recently Pervez Meherwanji's *Percy*. The novel which is really about how a young handicapped Parsi boy grows to manhood and the consciousness of wanting to be a writer, is also about the resilience of middle-class life. Compared to the films the novel definitely scores for it is certainly more funny and very irreverent about its subject matter. Having said this one is confronted with another problem. Frankly, how does one review a novel which has already been acclaimed abroad? Given the reverence that all English speaking Indians have for the literary establishment abroad, can one really pan a novel that has been hailed in every major newspaper in London? (The back of the dust jacket prints some of these reviews). I confess that I got around the problem by simply reading the novel and finding that I liked it very much.

The first thing that strikes you about this book is how well it is written. Given the fact that this is Kanga's first novel, technically it is quite a marvel. Dialogue is perhaps the most difficult thing to write in fiction. But Kanga's dialogues sparkle. This is perhaps one reason that having begun the novel it is so difficult to put it down. Given the theme of the novel it is also quite amazing how many Parsi writers have suddenly taken to publishing fiction in English (Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Rohinton Mistry and Farokh Dhondy come to mind). Perhaps *Trying to Grow* years from now will be seen as an inadvertent metaphor for a fledgling but burgeoning Indian fiction in English.

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In the end this wonderful novel is a love story—love for one's family and friends and the confused love bestowed on lovers. It is also about coming to terms with adult life and what it means to somebody who wants to be a writer.

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The narrator of this novel is Brit (short for brittle) Kotwal who suffers from *osteogenesis imperfecta*. This is a genetic affliction that make the bones extremely brittle in childhood. Brit grows up to be a cripple. But he is hardly helpless. He is well taken care of even though his parents despair of his condition and often dream of what it would have been like to have a 'normal' child. Brit grows up a wily child and shores up his experiences for future use as a writer. His biggest problem is however something else. As he confesses—osteo-sexlessness. But this is far from being the case. Brit dreams of sex day and night. Being handicapped he is always measuring his prowess *vis a vis* 'normal' men. The result is rather funny. One day dreaming of Marilyn Monroe Brit finds that he has unconsciously substituted her for his neighbour and friend Cyrus. Brit's confused sexuality adds to the mirth and hilarity of the novel. Things are further confused when Brit falls in love with Cyrus' girl-friend, Amy. His marraige to her, their break-up and final reconciliation is one of the best bits in the novel. It is to Kanga's credit that he can write about sex with so much frankness. It is courageous too. Not many Indian writers would dream of committing themselves in print like this. The earnest eroticism of this novel comes across very successfully.

In the gallery of portraits that Kanga paints in this novel, some are convincing and the others are not. The most engaging characters are Brit's parents Sera and Sam. There is none of the deliberately distanced and respectful picture of parents that in the popular Indian novel one finds so irritating. Where else does one find parents so ruthlessly yet so tenderly portrayed? Early in the novel we are told that Sera and Sam were not in love but were infatuated with each other's charm. But their love for their son knows no bounds. Sam is willing to take his son to a dubious sadhu Wagh Baba for a miracle cure. Instead Brit who confronts this naked fakir has his sexuality aroused! Sera is also given to prejudices especially when she discovers that her daughter is going to marry a Muslim. By voicing these prejudices Kanga brings forth the hidden fears and biases in Indian families candidly and completely over-turns their basis in real life. Dolly is Brit's sister, a happy-go-lucky character who loves her brother passionately even though Brit is insensitive to her feelings. When she finally leaves home to settle in New York, he discovers what an important friend he has lost, but it also makes him more self-reliant and independent. Less successful is the portrait of Madame Manekshaw who is Brit's teacher and seems like a character straight out of the magic-realist world of Salman Rushdie. Alas she is killed off in a car accident quite soon in the novel. Similarly a cousin who is deaf suddenly disappears from the novel when she elopes with her boy-friend and one keeps on wondering what enduring effect this has on Brit's mind, since she was one of his closest childhood friends.

Kanga lampoons the Parsis for their western ways and disdain for things Indian (including food). What a pity therefore that he falls prey to this himself. Dosas are rather curiously described as 'paper-thin pancakes rolled up like giant calendars' and Idlis as 'rice cakes'. A character is made fun of because she refers to her husband as a 'palestine' by which she basically means philistine. Now Indians are well known to 'indigenize' English, but in this case the confusion in pronunciation is too deliberately inventive to be funny. This is all the more surprising because elsewhere in the novel there is plentiful use of Indian words and they don't seem out of place. It is in moments like this that one starts wondering which audience Kanga is aiming at. Is it for like-minded Indians or for readers in the West less familiar with the idioms of Indian life?

In the end this wonderful novel is a love story—love for one's family and friends and the confused love bestowed on lovers. It is also about coming to terms with adult life and what it means to somebody who wants to be a writer. The happiest moment in the book is when Brit's first novel is accepted by a London publisher. And the most fulfilling bit is when faced with a personal crisis Brit confronts it honestly and courageously and then suddenly discovers that the writer's block which had plagued him has disappeared and he is able to write again. ❑

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Efficiency Profile of Public Enterprises in India, • by A.Q. Khan • Vohra Publishers & Distributors, Allahabad, pp. 151, Rs. 125.00

Efficiency is one of the basic prerequisites for keeping an organisation on sound and profitable lines irrespective of the type of organisation in operation, namely, private, public and cooperative. However, this basic element has been the missing link in public and cooperative forms of organisation.

In India the public sector has been assigned an increasing role in the process of development and hence, huge resources have also been directed towards public sector. But the benefits out of the performance of public sector have not been commensurate with the amount of investment made therein. This has been due to poor efficiency and the same has been responsible for the increasing overhead costs. Thus, the need of the hour is to make the public enterprises more and more effective and efficient in delivering goods to the nation in general and masses in particular. The book in question is a welcome step in this direction.

The book under review consists of seven well written chapters, a detailed bibliography and fourteen appendices. Index is missing. The author reviews the appraisal of operational efficiency of public enterprises in conventional terms. It identifies the main factors responsible in the attainment of higher productivity.

The study is of a micro-nature and concentrates on the performance appraisal of steel industry of India. It points out that Indian steel industry has failed in achieving the optimum level of output which is *sine qua non* for every form of organisation to keep itself on profitable lines and result oriented. In this respect the author also brings out the major factors underlying the retarded production which is the outcome of idle capacity and low productivity.

It is an undisputed fact that for the sake of monitoring the economic growth on successful lines, both at micro and macro levels, it is imperative to undertake a study of the profitability in a particular enterprise or unit. In this regard Dr. Khan has come up to the expectations and has analysed profitability determinants in the iron and steel industry.

Dr. Khan has taken a span of 26 years to bring to light the real trend of profitability inthe iron and steel industry of India, so that a logical assessment could be made for those who are directly or indirectly associated with the iron and steel industry in India. In this connection the author has used certain parameters such as profitability, sales growth, capital growth, investment in technology (financial), capacity utilisation, inventories and export earnings (physical) and also calculates various ratios in order to arrive at certain concrete conclusions.

In the light of financial and physical parameters, he further pinpoints the areas where many pitfalls lie such as inefficient utilisation capacity, infrastructural handicaps, strained industrial relations and the said constraints have affected the production and productivity horizons and as a result the Indian iron and steel industry has been lagging behind so far as major producers of iron and steel are concerned. The existing situation should be reversed in the years to come. In this respect a multipronged approach has to be adopted to deal with the malaise of poor and gloomy financial and physical performance.

The book is low-priced which is a plus point though proof-reading errors are irritating to the reader.

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Diffusion of Agricultural Innovations in Village India • by Satadal Das Gupta • Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi 1989, pp. xi+193, Rs. 150.00

The book under review is an analytical synthesis of the findings of nearly three hundred and fifty published studies on the diffusion and adoption of modern agricultural technology by Indian farmers.

The study is divided into eight chapters viz., Introduction, Diffusion and Innovations, the process of adoption, the adopters, Values, Attitudes and Social Structure, Channels of Communication, Opinion Leaders, Extension Agents and the Mass Media. Lastly Diffusion and Adoption of Agricultural Innovations: Summary and Conclusions. An extensive annotated bibliography list has also been given.

The introduction describes the overall plan of the book, diffusion studies in India between 1960-64 and 1980-85, components of diffusion, etc.. The goal of research of diffusion is to identify factors which influence the adoption and diffusion of agricultural innovations.

Chapter two is devoted to diffusion of innovations. The author has explained clearly the S shaped diffusion curve. Innovation characteristics and diffusion rate have been explained elaborately. The author points out that the improved or high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers, plant protection, chemicals and improved implements have been the most frequent items of study and only a few studies deal with the diffusion of improved management and marketing techniques.

Chapter three deals with process of adoption awareness, stages used in Indian research, adoption stages—heuristic or real—and sources of information. The adoption period, awareness and adoption, average length of adoption period by four adopted categories viz, innovators, early adopters, late adopters and laggards have been explained neatly. Importantly the author says that some farmers often reject an innovation instead of adopting it. Non-adoption of an innovation does not necessarily mean rejection. Farmers are sometimes unable to adopt an innovation, even though they have mentally accepted it, because of economic or situational constraints.

The author goes into the measures of adoption formula for the adoption score, year of adoption traceline scale of adoption, adopter characteristics, etc.. Adopters are classified into a number of categories based on the level of their adoption behaviour. The distribution of adopters over time within a social system follows a bell-shaped curve and approaches normality. The author observes that the non-adopters are relatively old in age have a low rate of literacy and level of formal education, operate small holdings, are mostly share-croppers of small and marginal farmers belong to low income and economic status, have a subsistence orientation to farming, belong to low castes, have a low level of social participation have a low level of extension contact and come from low socio-economic status.

Attitudes, values and social structure have been analysed in depth. The author goes into family background and behaviour-patterns on adoption. modernisation of peasant values and adoption. community factors in adoption of agricultural innovation. Caste structure and its input on modern technology, leader structure related with diffusion have also been explained clearly. The author finds that peasants have distinctive subcultures of their own made up of a number of interrelated values and attitudes. The structure of the community which influence the farmer's adop-

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

tion behaviour are caste structure, leadership structure, action structure and attitudinal structure. High adoption villages tend to have a clearly defined leadership structure based on wide recognition on the part of villagers. Low-adoption villages have a dispersed and diffused leadership structure.

In the channels of communication chapter, the author has analysed clearly the institutional and non-institutional sources of communication, village level workers participation, agricultural extension officer's and block development officer's role. The use of print and non-print varieties of communication is highly negligible among the Indian farmers. The low levels of literacy and formal education of Indian farmers, their poor access to radio and television are seen to be the main reasons of the insignificant use of the mass media of information. Institutional sources are used more frequently by farmers who are relatively young in age, literate or have some formal schooling, belong to earlier adopter categories, own and operate large sized holdings and come from upper castes.

Opinion leaders, extension agents and the mass media role have been analysed in chapter eight. The author has elaborately analysed the two-step flow of communication, opinion leadership role, characteristics of opinion leaders, etc.. Opinion leaders are innovative, have a high level of adoption behaviour, wide external contact, and use institutional sources of information. Extension agents are the most important sources of information to Indian farmers. Opinion leaders obtain their information from institutional sources and transmit them to their neighbours, friends and relatives in their villages.

Finally it gives a brief chapterwise summary and conclusions. Though the book will be a useful add-ition to researchers, policy makers, planners, extension officers and students, it is not a balanced one as it does not consult other reputed journals.

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The Development of Indian Silk • by Sanjay Sinha • Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. (P) Ltd. New Delhi, 1990, pp. 103, Rs. 95.00

The book under review is a comprehensive survey of the techno-economic issues in the production of silk in India and the developmental effects of the activity on rural development. This book is based on the published research and statistical reports on silk production supplemented by a few field studies.

In the introductory note, the author has outlined the origin of silk in the world and also in India. The author has presented a brief history of sericulture in different countries. A more detailed presentation would have made the book valuable to all concerned in the silk industry.

The first chapter elaborates the share of India in world silk production, silk trade and its importance. The author has presented a picture of growth of the Indian silk industry after 1950; share of mulberry silk in total silk production, regional concentration of production and women labour intensity. In the absence of reliable database for this industry, the author has vehemently discussed the estimation of employment generation by the Central Silk Board and Plan documents.

The second chapter presents a note on the production systems in mulberry and non-mulberry silk production and its products. The description is based on the information provided by the Central Silk Board and a few other studies. The changing market situation in domestic and export markets has been discussed in this chapter.

The chapter "Policy Environment in India", presents an overview of the administrative machinery, concession and assistance provided, extension service network, research support, policy options for regulating the markets, State intervention as a producer and facilities for export promotion for silk. A brief account on the recently introduced "National Sericulture Project" follows.

The fourth chapter highlights the technological issues in the development of Indian silk production such as cocoon production, bivoltine programme, reeling of cocoon, modernisation of reeling, health hazards in reeling, cost and quality of cocoon, pre-weaving process and weaving. The author has made two major observations: processing technology is totally out of tune with existing realities of the Indian Silk Industry; if bivoltine production does not improve, the modernisation process will have to ignore domestic sericulture completely, and its employment implications.

The micro economic issues pertaining to the cocoon and raw silk prices, variations in productivity, returns at different stages of production and value addition to the produce have been presented in the fifth chapter.

The author has devoted a whole chapter to the socio-economic consequences of the developmental impact of labour intensity—as a provider of rural women's employment; location of this activity in rural and semi-urban centres and the consequent transfer of resources from affluent class to poor. This chapter also deals with the expanding growth potentialities of Indian sericulture as an agent of rural development, as also the distributional aspects in sericulture, and the strategies for developmental activities pertaining to market, price stabilization, bivoltine production and policy options have also been suggested.

In the course of summing up, the author has observed that the development in the recent years can be a function of "demand pull factors of the income-elastic domestic and foreign markets". Further he emphasises the appropriateness of technological changes for tropical zones, manpower development for extension network and diversification of products accompanied by the standardization as acceptable in the international silk markets. The book is a consolidation of various reports and research studies. The author could have included an empirical analysis designed separately for this book. However, it is a valuable addition to the scarce literature on the economics of sericulture and silk industry.

R. Venkataravi is a research scholar in Economics in the Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu.

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Economic Development And Social Change - M. Kunhaman. A welcome contribution to the analysis of the political economy of exploitation. Research Review, University of Kerala, 1990, Rs. 55.00 & $ 15.

World Development Report 1990 - The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. The problem of reducing the absolute poverty still rampant in many developing countries forms the theme of the 13th annual report released by the World Bank. Published by the Oxford University Press for the World Bank.

The Political Economy of Indian Sugar : State Intervention and Structural Change - Sanjaya Baru. An important study which examines how state intervention has helped shape the industry in terms of ownership patterns, locational structure, technical change and the distribution of gains between the growers and the mills. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 175.00.

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■ CENTENARY VOLUMES

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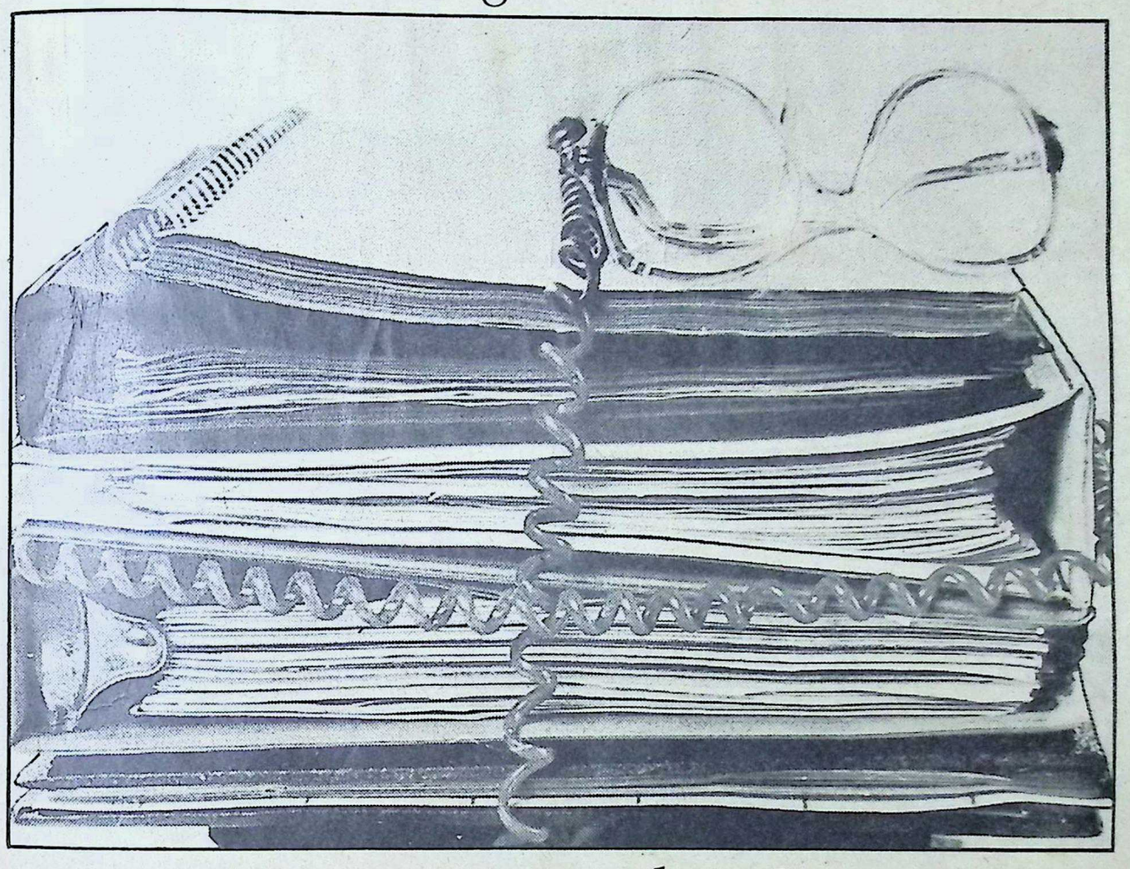

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Fr. JOHN CORREIA-AFONSO, an authority on Indo-Portuguese history, is currently Director of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Bombay. He has been twice Principal of St.Xavier's College, Bombay, and Secretary-General of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

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SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM is Reader in Economics at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. He has studied in Delhi, taught in Lisbon, Philadelphia and Delhi, and been Visiting Fellow in Cambridge (U.K.). He is the editor of *Merchants, Market and the State in Early Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

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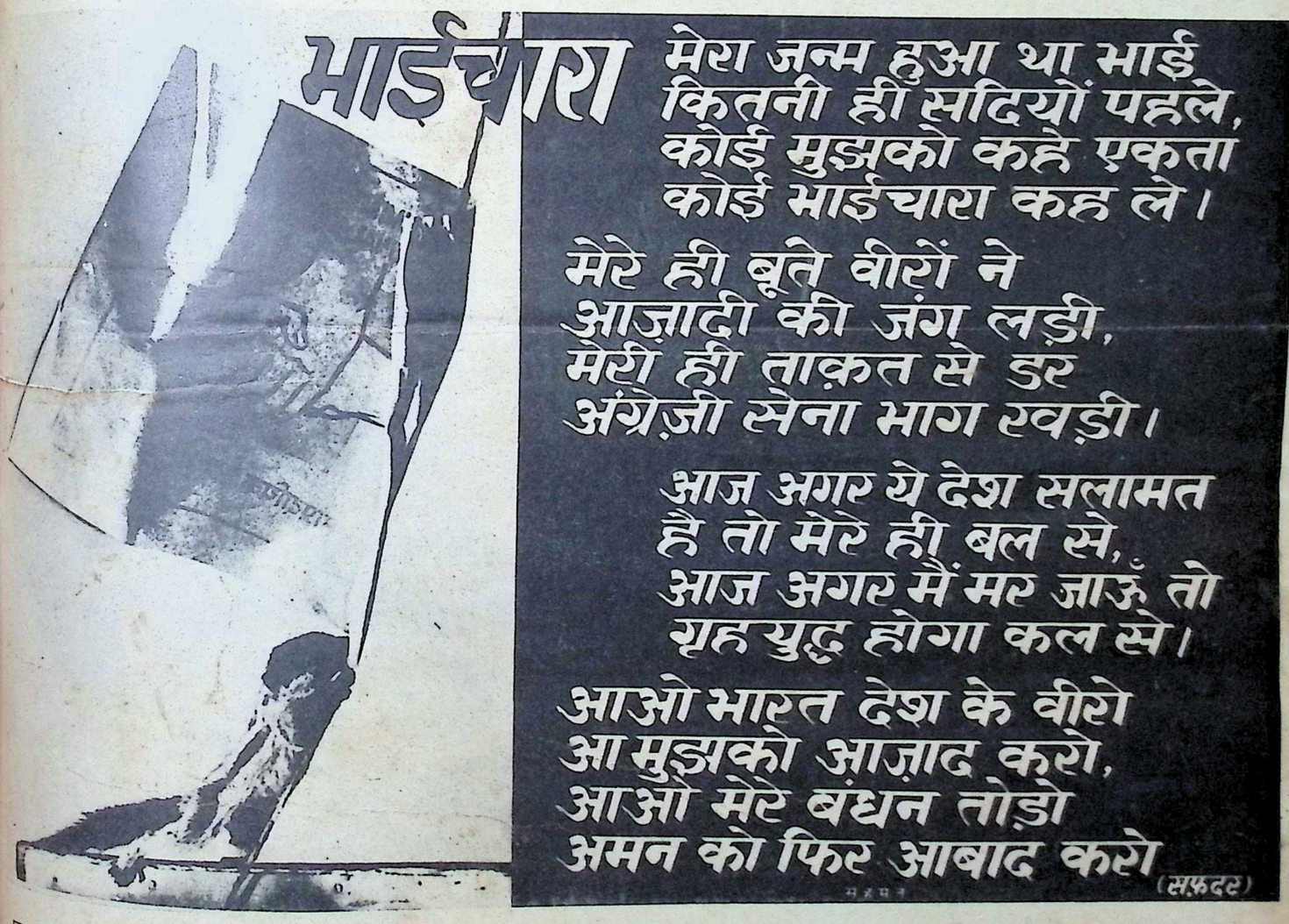

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The Contextual Man

N.S. Jagannathan

INDIA THROUGH HINDU CATEGORIES

Edited by McKim Marriott

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 209, Rs. 250.00.

This book is the result of a growing conviction during the seventies and eighties among serious students of Indian sociology that the social realities of India and other South Asian nations cannot be seriously explored or adequately understood wholly with the help of paradigms developed elsewhere. As Dr Mckim Marriott argues in his introduction, categories developed by western scholars are rooted basically in their own culture and therefore "rarely fit Indian definition of reality". It is therefore indispensable to develop a new ethnosociological theory for understanding Indian culture.

As he puts it, "constructing in theoretical social science for a culture requires somewhat more than providing a meaningful cultural account: it requires building from the culture's natural categories a general system of concepts that can be formally defined in relation to each other; it requires developing words and measures that can be used rigorously for description, analysis and explanation within that culture; and it especially requires deductive strategies that can generate hypothesis for empirical tests in order that the science may criticize itself and grow. It requires doing all this in terms that will be analytically powerful enough to define all the major parameters of living in that culture without violating the culture's ontology, its presuppositions or its epistemology".

This is a daunting enterprise in itself but Dr Marriott has assigned himself in his introductory essay the further task of a cross-cultural translation of the indigenous categories into "metaconcepts" familiar to Western social science, both for a better understanding of the culture studied and for comparative purposes. The approach is somewhat analogous to what J B Carman calls in his study of Ramanuja the "phenomenological approach" to religion as developed by Kristensen and Van der Leeuw of the Netherlands. (The Theology of Ramanuja: Yale University Press, 1974).

N.S. Jagannathan, a journalist of repute, is advisor to the Indian Express group of newspapers.

The term is somewhat misleading at first sight, as the Greek word phenomenon means "appearance" which would suggest that the phenomenologist student of religion is an outsider and a mere observer. But Carman's exegesis makes it clear that the approach really involves first, trying to understand the religion studied in terms of its own traditions, semantics and belief structures and then applying "one's own religious concepts and categories, not in order to evaluate but in order to understand."

Scholars have often discussed Indian texts (like the Mahabharata) as if they were loose-leaf files, rag-bag encyclopaedias. Taking the Indian word for text, grantha (derived from the knot that holds the palm leaves together), literally, scholars often posit only an accidental and physical unity. We need to attend to the context-sensitive designs that embed a seeming variety of modern tale, discourse, poem, etc.) and materials. This manner of constructing the text is in consonance with other designs in the culture. Not unity (in the Aristotelian sense) but coherence seems to be the end.

From A.K. Ramanujan's Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?

How useful is such a procedure in ethnosociology? In his preface to this book Dr Madan has rightly warned that "the subject is too serious for *obiter dicta*." Even so, greatly daring, one could venture the view that it is a methodology easier to apply to the realms of pure ideas like theology than to social behaviour. And it does seem, at least to one lay reader, that Marriott's endeavours have produced a Procrustean bed on which Indian social reality, particularly in its contemporary manifestations, cannot lie comfortably.

Basically, Marriott's is a geometric model accommodating several mutually supportive combinations of Hindu concepts. The *Pancha Bhutas* or five elements in the field of physics, *tridoshas* or three humours in the field of medicine, the threefold character typology of *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*/gunas in psychology, and the schema of human aims, the *purushartas*.

There is no space—nor in all candour, do I have the equipment—to discuss here the details of this ethnosociological configuration. Those interested may have to explore these recondite matters themselves. Many of the other essays in the volume have attempted to use—or in turn provide material for the "constructs" developed by Marriott. These micro-studies do contain interesting insights into Indian social behaviour but their main interest is for theoreticians in ethnosociology.

Marriott's strenuously self-conscious attempt as an "Outsider/Insider" to get under the skin of Hindu categories is in some contrast to Insider/Outsider. A K Ramanujan is infinitely more relaxed playing around with these categories in the highly readable "informal essay" seeking to answer the question whether there is such a thing as an Indian way of thinking. The rest of the review is devoted to a detailed consideration of this study.

All cultures, argues Ramanujan, have their ideals, and though individual or group behaviour may not be wholly or always in conformity with them, conduct is unconsciously conditioned by these ideals. But what distinguishes Indian (Hindu) behaviour is that the cultural ideals under which it operates are "context-sensitive" rather than "context-free". These are concepts that Ramanujan has borrowed from one of his several academic disciplines, linguistics. Quoting Frits Staal, he says that what Euclid was to European thought, Paanini was to Indian, and postulates "Grammar is the central model for thinking in many Hindu texts".

The Hindu passion for classification and taxonomy (a priori rather than empirical) derives, he argues, from its concern with "the logic of classes, or genera and species or *Jaati*." It covers the whole gamut of human experience—"seasons, landscape, times, qualities (gunas) and their material bases, tastes, characters, emotions, aesthetic essence or *Rasaas*, which are basic to the thought-work of Hindu medicine and poetry, cooking and religion, erotics and magic. Each *Jaati* or class defines a context, a structure of relevance, a rule of permissible combinations, a frame of reference, a metacommunication of what is and can be done."

A context-sensitive, location-specific, particularised ethics rather than universal categorical imperatives has been the intellectual and practical continuum in which all Indians consciously—and in more recent centuries, unconsciously—behaved, until, still more recently, some, consciously began to adopt and self-consciously to practise context-free ethics and behaviour under "alien" influence.

Ramanujan illustrates the difference between the two mores with telling quotations from Kant, Hegel, Manu and Gautama. Take for example, the question of the truthfulness of Indians that vexed, among others, Lord Curzon. Despite the unqualified Upanishadic injunction, *Satyam Vada*—speak the truth—Manu has laid down that "At the time of marriage, during dalliance, when life is in danger, when loss of property is threatened, and for the sake of a Brahmana," truth is expendable. (A

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Tamil proverb in the form of a maxim permits (enjoins?) one to tell a thousand lies and bring about a marriage!) Manu also said, "whenever the death of a man of *any of the four castes* (emphasis added) would be occasioned by true evidence, falsehood was even better than truth". Macaulay's criminal jurisprudence and his Evidence Act are still fighting a losing battle in our courts against this injunction internalised long ago by Indians.

Against this relativistic ethics, Ramanujan poses Kant's stern formulation: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature". A different aspect of the Hindu View of Life is encapsulated in Hegel's perceptive observation quoted by Ramanujan: "We (Europeans) say 'Bravery is a virtue; the Hindus say, on the contrary, 'Bravery is virtue of the Kshatriyas."

Ramanujan also notes two other peculiarities of Indian (Hindu) thinking: One is "the metronomic view of man in nature—man in context—in which what he has he becomes". "The sacrificial horse", says Ramanujan—in the manner of Gertrude Stein's "A rose is a rose is a rose—"is the universe is Prajapathi... . In sacrificing and partaking of it one is sacrificing and partaking of the universe itself". Tamil folk-wisdom embodies the same principle in the ironic comment on the priest's parsimony in making a votive offering to an icon of Vinayaka made of jaggery with a bit of the jaggery chipped off from the icon itself! (Incidentally, the literalness of the ritualistic symbolism should dispel the disingenuous claims made by orbiting Gurus merchandising abroad "spiritual" India as opposed to the "materialistic" west.)

The other attribute of Indian (Hindu) mode of thinking and feeling is the notion that "the microcosm is both *within* and *like* the macrocosm, and paradoxically also contains it". Ramanujan invokes in this context the concept of "*Kosas*" or "Concentric nests". As with many Hindu notions, this concept has many applications and reverberations. Applied to an ethical code, it envisages a *Sadharana Dharma* or common (universal?) ethics that encompasses within itself an *Ashrama Dharma* (conduct appropriate to one of the four stages of life like *Brahmacharya* etc.) *Swadharma* (conduct that is right for your station, *Jaati* or class), *Swabhava* (given nature) and *aapaddharma* (conduct appropriate—permissible?—in times of extremity). As Ramanujan wryly comments, after these context-conditioned *Dharmas* are scooped out, little is left of universal categorical imperatives!

Ramanujan gives many examples from Indian aesthetic theory, physiological and pathological first principles in Hindu medicine (*Doshas*) and psychological typology (*Gunas*) as well as from real life of an over-arching mind-set that is context and location specific. It is indeed an overwhelming case he makes for the proposition that the non-universal ethical categories legitimised by law-givers like Manu are of a piece with an entire mode of thinking and feeling embedded in the racial memories of Indians (Hindus).

> *My purpose here is not to evaluate but to grope toward a description of the two kinds of emphases. Yet in each of these kinds of cultures, despite all the complexity and oscillation, there is a definite bias. The Buddha (who said 'when we see a man shot with poisoned arrow, we cannot afford to ask what caste he or his enemy is) also told the following parable of the Raft: Once a man was drowning in a sudden flood. Just as he was about to drown, he found a raft. He clung to it and it carried him safely to dry land. And he was so grateful to the raft that he carried it on his back for the rest of his life. Such was the Buddha's comment on context-free systems.*
>
> *From A.K. Ramanujan's*
> Is There an Indian Way of Thinking

However, one must mildly demur at Ramanujan's unqualified use for the purposes of his argument the five-fold taxonomy of early Tamil aesthetics as exemplified in the *Sangam* poetry (circa 3rd century BC to 3rd century AD). The so-called *Aintinais* or the five-fold loci are a brilliant literary device assigning appropriate emotions for a five-fold physiography and associated landscapes, flora and fauna: Hills referred to as the Kurinji Tinai (after its uniquely associative flower are for fulfilled love. *Paalai* (arid region) is for unrequited longing, often as a result of involuntary separation from one's lover and so on.

It is indeed "an eco-system of which a man's activities are a part" and an inter-penetrative continuum of human emotion and its ambience. But there is no equivalent to this detailed and rigorously applied taxonomy of locales and emotions in Sanskrit (or indeed in later Tamil poetry). So, this particular contextualisation is strictly speaking (early) Tamil rather than Hindu, if only because it has no presence in Sanskrit literary theory which, otherwise is extremely taxonomic, with its eight rasaas (crystallized emotions) and six-fold typology of heroes and heroines etc.

A society so completely permeated by a tyrannical contextualisation has however two escape routes. One of them is provided for in the age-old schema of ultimate ends (or *purushartas*) itself. The other is the more recently born protestant ethic and theology, the *Bhakti* movement. *Moksha*, the ultimate objective of man prescribed by every school of Hindu philosophy is quite simply a release from context-conditioning into, literally, freedom.

The other road (*marga*) to freedom from context-controlled conduct is *Bhakti* "which denies the very need for context. *Bhakti* defies all contextual structures: every pigeonhole of caste, ritual, gender, appropriate clothing and custom, stage of life, the whole system of homo *hierarchicus* ('everything in its place') is the target of its irony". However, as often happens in India with "alien" influences, *Bhakti* also was quickly co-opted into context-sensitive orthodoxies, as is evident from the fact that the *Srivaishnavas* of the South—of whom Ramanujan and I are two—are among the most context-conscious Hindus!

Ramanujan has some pertinent observations on the vicissitudes of the imposition of "context-free" cultures on Indian (Hindu) mores. The Indian Constitution's attempt to "de-recognizing" by law distinctions immemorially internalised by this psyche has had some weird consequences. The indestructibility of the context-conditioned mores of behaviour is only all too tragically evident in the current turmoil over the Mandal Commission's report. Less traumatically, there have been varying degrees of co-option, short of total absorption or assimilation, of the two systems.

Ramanujan quotes some amusing examples of de-contextualisation by fiat. His list could be enlarged by others from their own experience. For example, M G Ramachandran's resolve to eliminate caste from public consciousness expressed itself in attempts to erase caste suggestions in street names. This has led to some bizarreries like the earlier "Brahmin street" becoming just "Street"! On the other hand, mutual accommodation of the two cultures is to be seen in non-antagonistic contradictions like avoiding the *Rahu Kala* for launching industrial ventures and heart warming customs like having turmeric smeared on computers and typewriters as part of worshipping one's tools on Ayudha puja or Visvakarma day.

The key question still remains. After two centuries of continuous osmosis, if not an even deeper inter-penetration, of a context-sensitive and a context-free culture, is there a new, third, "Indian" way of thinking? Only an inconclusive answer is possible. There has perhaps been a more or less uneasy accommodation of the two cultures in the Indian psyche but no displacement or ejection of one by the other. (Maybe—changing the metaphor—some anti-bodies have been created?)

Such inconclusiveness is exasperating to those who do not have the Keatsian "negative capability". Like Blake whom Ramanujan quotes as an example, Keats also is a counter-culturist in the Western tradition. His formulation of "*negative capability*" (which he invokes to praise Shakespeare) is worth quoting, "the capacity to be "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without an irritating reaching after fact and reason". There, if you like, is as accurate a description of the Indian (Hindu) way of thinking as you are ever likely to get. But then, as the old colonial curmudgeon is supposed to have said in exasperation, "Everything you say about an Indian, the opposite is also true"! ❑

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Towards Psychological Deterrence

Bharat Wariavwalla

BALANCE OF POWER IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

By Rikhi Jaipal

Allied Publishers Ltd., 1989, pp. 208, Rs. 125.00

There is no point in arguing with history, the noted historian, Sir Lewis Nemier, once said. The book should not be read from the standpoint of the present. None thought the Soviet empire (in East Europe) would disintegrate so suddenly and swiftly. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 has ushered in a new world, which obviously the author could not have anticipated at the time of his writing. The two foremost adversaries, the United States and the Soviet Union, have now concluded important arms control agreements, which a few years ago would have seemed impossible. Today it is politics, entente between them, that very largely determines the Soviet and American strategic policies. Cold War is now history.

The book is cast in the coldwar setting and therefore should be read in this context. A former diplomat who had much to do with the debates on the issues of arms control and disarmament in the UN, Rikhi Jaipal, now adresses himself to these issues as a scholar. The book admirably puts together his "thoughts", as he says in the preface, on such issues and concepts as balance of power, stability, deterrence, the the UN and its failure in settling disputes between states and Soviet-American arms control negotiations. The last two chapters are on our nuclear policy and foreign policy (the foreign policy under Nehru-1) and they are greatly disappointing because here he writes as spokesman of the government and not as a discerning scholar.

It is the treatment of such concepts as balance of power and balance of deterrence, strategic stability, etc., that puts this book above many such works. Most Indian diplomats are not in the habit of writing or seriously reflecting on their diplomatic experiences, and those few who have generally write anecdotal accounts which they call memoirs. To call them memoirs is to debase this great genre of writing, so well exemplified by such persons as Guicciardini, Metternich, De Gaulle or Kennan.

Jaipal examines the large questions of power, diplomacy, balance, stability, etc., which have preoccupied the practitioners and theorists of statecraft ever since the modern state system was born with the conclusion of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. His analysis is informed by his overriding concern for peace. His basic values are unequivocally stated in the book: adherence of nuclear weapons, revulsion at what Thomas Schelling used to call the diplomacy of violence, strong disapproval of the great powers' frequent resort to use of force and consequent undermining of the UN role in peace keeping. He greatly values humane diplomacy, and believes it can be creatively used to preserve peace in the nuclear age.

> *The possessors of the weapons of mass destruction are caught in a unique strategic dilemma; how to use them politically and psychologically so as not to use them militarily.*

His selective historical examination of the European diplomacy of the past three hundred years leads him to believe that the traditional "balance of power system was sophisticated, relatively stable, and more equitous in relation to the present imbalance of terror." (p.18). The classical balance of power system was stable at times (between the second peace of Paris, 1815, to the outbreak of World War I,) but it was greatly oppressive. What Henry Kissinger called "a hundred year peace" in his superb work *A World Restored*, rested on an oppressive socio-economic status quo, maintained by force. Three of the five concert powers, Prussia, the Hapsburg Monarch, and Czarist Russia, often intervened to put down domestic unrest in various European countries. Granted that the balance of power system maintained peace in the nineteenth century, what about the eighteenth century? It witnessed only four years of peace, or to put it more correctly, absence of large scale conflicts.

I wish somewhere the author had distinguished between the classical balance of power system and the contemporary balance of deterrence system. The former is a mechanical system in the sense that power (mostly military power) is roughly balanced between the antagonists; the latter is an entirely psychological phenomenon in the sense that nuclear deterrence rests on the threat of extinction. The possessors of the weapons of mass destruction are caught in a unique strategic dilemma; how to use them politically and psychologically so as not to use them militarily.

The author cuts through long, complicated Soviet American arms control and disarmament negotiations and comes straight to the heart of the matter. It was their antagonistic political relationship that blocked progress in US-USSR arms control talks. This has now changed and the prospects of major arms control measures being reached are indeed bright.

Jaipal defends to the hilt our nuclear policy. Scepticism, subtlety, careful sifting of data, which he applies to his analysis of Soviet and American policies, completely disappear when it comes to our nuclear and foreign policy. Indian government's statements and explanations are taken to be true. Thus he says that our "peaceful nuclear explosion was "nothing more than a test conceived and conducted exclusively for peaceful purposes." By way of evidence that we had no other purpose in mind other than the exploitation of nuclear energy for civilian purposes, he cites our decision to refrain from conducting any more tests of the kind we undertook in May 1974. And he rejects the proposal for making South Asia a nuclear free zone on the ground that the region cannot be isolated from Eurasia, a region in "Which the nuclear weapons States (China and US) have intricate systems of military and political alliances." (p. 149)

This is standard Indian position expressed on countless number of occasions by Indian officials and large number of journalists and academics. It has convinced few outside the country. I wonder how our decision not to have any more PNEs could be taken as a proof of our "commendable self-restraint" and benign intentions. The Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr Raja Ramana, was stressing all along in 1974 the need for several tests. Why did we refrain from having more PNEs? Out of fear of Western pressures (our aid dependence) or because of our benign intentions? The former consideration is more likely, but the latter one is surely a fabrication. Anyway now the country is well set on the course to be a nuclear weapons power, despite official claims to the contrary.

Despite this major flaw, the book sensitively explores the problems of statecraft in the nuclear age. ❑

Bharat Wariavwalla is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and before that, he was visiting senior fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi where he worked on the State, Market and Democracy project. He is a frequent commentator on international affairs, and has contributed articles to the Los Angeles Times, Die Zeit, *a German weekly and in the Indian press.*

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Alleviating Rural Poverty

H. Venkatasubbiah

The authors also recognise that market forces, like urban markets for rural products and migration to urban centres for wage employment, have made participatory management feasible. But an "integration of people along with other agents of decision-making, namely, government, technology and social and cultural institutions alone can lead to a total concept of development (p. 143)".

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Managing the Market

Badar A. Iqbal

REGULATED MARKET IN A RURAL ECONOMY

by G.N. Murthy

Ajanta publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 321, Rs. 200.00

Rural India constitutes 67 and 37 per cent of India's total employment and national income respectively. However, farmers have been facing the problem in marketing their produce. This phenomenon has been due to defective marketing practices and lack of professional approach to marketing. In this direction, the Central Government has been taking pains to establish regulated agricultural markets for the development of the rural economy.

The need to have such markets was conceived with the hope of weeding out the existing market practices in rural economy on the one hand and on the other hand to make all out efforts for creating and inducing the proper environment of orderly marketing. Since the establishment of regulated agricultural markets, some improvement has been witnessed in the existing marketing conditions. However, it is generally observed that there has been a wide gap between promise and performance which requires an in depth analysis of performance and root causes responsible for such a state of affairs. The book under review is a modest attempt in the said direction.

The study which is an outgrowth of author's doctoral thesis consists of eight chapters, a select bibliography and an index. It evaluates the performance in regard to various facets of rural marketing, namely, physical performance, financial performance, price efficiency and competitive conditions. Added to this, the study further reviews objectives of regulated markets and also highlights the extent to which the interest of farmers is protected and safeguarded under the scheme of regulated market.

In his foreword, Professor J. Satyanarayana, a professor of commerce at Osmania University, Hyderabad, opines that the study is painstaking and makes considerable contribution towards better understanding of the various facets related to the problems of management, finance, costs, prices and farmer-trader relationship. Satyanarayana rightly brings out that while the financial performance of some of the regulated markets was unsatisfactory, the Warangal regulated market built up an accumulated surplus of nearly one crore rupees over a period of ten years (1972-1982). This is a striking feature and needs an overall review of the performance of those markets whose performance is unsatisfactory.

Badar A. Iqbal is an Associate Professor in the Department of Commerce, AMU, Aligarh.

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In his introduction, the author traces the origin of the concept of regulated market in the rural economy of India right from 1928 (Royal Commission on Agriculture), 1932 (Central Banking Enquiry Committee). Thereafter, he reviews the existing literature on the problem of regulated markets in the rural economy of India. He quotes many important studies—Uma J. Lele (1971), Holmes (1969), Moore, S.R. (1973), Kulkarni B.D. (1977), Subba Rao (1978), Barbara Harris (1980) and Prasad, S.R. (1982) on the subject. However, studies quoted in the book are old. Recent studies on the subject have not been taken note of. Since 1984 when this doctoral thesis was originally submitted there have been many important studies on the subject, which if included, would have increased the academic value of the book.

Chapter I deals with the organization and working of regulated markets in Andhra Pradesh which include a critical analysis of the evolution and growth of regulated markets and organizational pattern at the level of marketing department. However, data used in the analysis is too old (1932) and will serve a limited purpose.

'Regulated Markets in Warangal District—An Overview' deals with the organizational structure of regulated markets at the district level (micro-level) and also highlights the profiles of the market in the district in a detailed manner.

Chapter III is devoted to trends in physical performance—market arrivals/volume of business transacted—which is an important indicator of the physical performance of a regulated market in a rural economy. The chapter includes a discussion on commodity coverage, composition of arrivals, time pattern of arrivals, growth of arrivals and inter-relationship between arrivals and production, prices, amenities, competitive conditions, regulations and the attitudes of the farmers in the disposal of their produce.

In regard to financial performance (Chapter 4), the study gives a detailed account of sources and uses of Market Committee Fund and also analyses trends in income, expenditure and surplus of the regulated marketing in the district. Added to this, discussion on the application of tools of financial controls (budgets, financial rules, accounting procedures and audit) in the management of regulated markets is provided. The entire discussion is based on the financial statements of the concerned markets.

Chapter V brings to light the nature of competition prevailing in the regulated markets of the district and also highlights the extent to which they differ from the ideal conditions. Farmers' perceptions reveal that competitive conditions do not exist in all the regulated markets in general and small markets in particular. In order to improve the situation, a few respondents suggested the involvement of cooperative marketing societies on large scale in agricultural marketing, providing incentives to small traders and increasing their competitive strength. However modalities of such schemes are the missing links in the chapter.

The Chapter entitled "Evaluation of Objectives I" deals with the establishment of market yards, dissemination of market information and the democratic functioning of Mcs of regulated markets which are sine-quo-non of their successful working in the rural economy of India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular.

"Evaluation of objectives II" analyses the performance of regulated markets in fulfilling the objectives pertaining to the regulation of market practices, rationalisation of market changes and the settlement of disputes arising in the market. It also gives an interaction of the views of major constituents (farmers, traders and members of Mcs) of regulated markets.

The study concludes with an analysis of chapterwise conclusions and suggestions. The nature of conclusions and suggestions is logical and would serve as valuable reference material. The most noteworthy feature of the study is the interaction of primary and secondary data which is a rare approach in such type of studies in recent times. ❑

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Barriers Broken

A. Narayanamoorthy

PRODUCTION RELATIONS AND AGRARIAN CHANGE IN TAMILNADU

By Venkatesh B. Athreya, Goran Djurfeldt and Staffan Lindberg

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 336, Rs. 250.00

The book under review is based on an indepth survey of 367 agrarian households in south India. It contains nine parts viz, Introduction; Methods; Ecology; Changing Land Relations; Labour Relations; Identification of Agrarian Classes; Usury and Credit; Economics of Scale or Advantage of Class; and Summary and Conclusion. It gives a detailed reference list.

The book systematically compares two ecotypes in Indian agriculture: rained cultivation and irrigated agriculture. The main aim of the book is to make a systematic comparison of different agrarian ecotypes (tank irrigation, canal irrigation, well irrigation and dry farming) which are considered as infrastructures for different relations of production. The authors have made an empirical investigation based on an on-going debate on production relationship (p.15).

In the introduction, the authors deal with the aim of the project, the choice of study area, the history of valleys and plains, wet area and the dry area condition. The authors investigated the caste structure of both ecotypes systematically. They found "landless proletariat of untouchables characteristic of the wet ecotype, has no real counterpart in the dry one" (p.27).

The second chapter is devoted to methodology (methods of analysis). The authors have developed a new technique of analysis. They have also given models for the selection of villages, and quantity and quality methods of data collection, formula for the sample selection which will be useful for researchers.

In the ecology chapter they have focussed on climate, soils, etc. which determine land use and cropping patterns. Though it centers on radical political economy, it also explains intensively land salinization and its impact on yield and soil nutrient (p.56). The crop pattern between wet and dry villages has differed entirely. They explored the reasons for such variations. The use of High Yielding Varieties (HYV), and Locally Improved Varieties (LIV) have been explained neatly. Interestingly, they found that there had been significant variations in yield between HYVs and LIV (pp 77-78). It is also pointed out that about 50 to 75 per cent of the cultivated area has been occupied by the HYVs. They have also explained the impact of the use of fertilizers and pesticides on yields stability and land condition (p.88).

The study goes on to deal with changing land relations, landownership, tenancy, changes in the distribution of land, etc. The authors found that the ownership structure was extremely polarized in the wet area, while there was much less inequality in other ecotypes (p.122). Likewise, the magnitude of landlessness is high in the wet area and low in the dry one.

In the chapter on labour relations, for the sake of simplicity, the scholars have first considered only two forms of labour as predominant: family and hired. Permanent farm servants constitute a minority of the wage labour force in both ecotypes and they are used by farmers mainly as a substitute for family labourers. (p.118). Daily wage labour is common in both ecotypes. But a significant difference is that gang labour prevails in wet areas. They have also discussed the other major categories of labour viz., family labour classified cropwise and also according to ecotypes, which is a novel method.

The Chapter on Identification of Agrarian Classes, deals with conceptual problems relating to definition of class, relations of production and class, relation to agricultural labour market, reproduction of the family and the farm. It deals with the surplus criterion of class. Poor peasant or semi-proletarians are defined with a simple formula. Mathematical definitions of the surplus criterion are also explained clearly. The authors have developed a new quantitative methodology to study agrarian class relations.

The usury and credit chapter analyses both institutional and non-institutional loans. About 50 per cent of all credit in both ecotypes come from the institutional sources. Importantly 80 to 90 per cent of the population is indebted in both areas (p.246). Purposes of borrowing, mean debt and median rate of interest per household by class and ecotype have been explained elaborately.

Chapter eight is devoted to economies of scale or advantage of class. The authors conclude that land size is not necessarily the best measure of scale. Intensity of cultivation and class status of cultivating households play an important role in determining the productivity. And more importantly ecological and historical specificities of farm economy play an important role in the determination of productivity.

Finally it gives briefly chapter wise summary and conclusion. On the whole, the book provides highly useful material on agricultural economics which will be helpful to researchers, planners, policy makers, students of agriculture as well as economics. ❑

A. Narayanamoorthy is a research scholar in the Department of Economics, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli.

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Treasuries Of Perennial Joy

A. Ranganathan

SELECTED LETTERS OF
ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Edited by Alvin Moore, Jr. and Rama Poonambulam Coomaraswamy

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 479, Rs. 250.00

SELECTED LETTERS OF ROMAIN ROLLAND

Edited by Francis Dore and Marie-Laure Prevost

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 139, Rs. 125.00

"I forgot to say" observed the great English poet Byron, "that one of the great pleasures of reading old letters is the knowledge that they need no answer." Indeed great letters make not only interesting reading but also help in exploring fascinating areas in the fields of biography, literature and history. Again just as Leslie Stephen termed autobiography the most fascinating branch of literature, so could one argue that private letters constitute an equally fascinating branch of autobiography. Furthermore, it is well to remember that letter-writers include some of the greatest scientists, artists, men of letters, statesmen and military generals.

Specifically great letters shed light on the main currents of history. Indeed we can perceive the dawn of history through the letters of Saint Paul; similarly we can understand the age of the Renaissance through the letters of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo; again we can witness the great revolutions of history through letters—the French Revolution through the letters of George Washington, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson; also we can catch glimpses of twentieth century history through the letters of Jawaharlal Nehru and Winston Churchill. And we can understand the fundamental basis of traditional thought through the letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy.

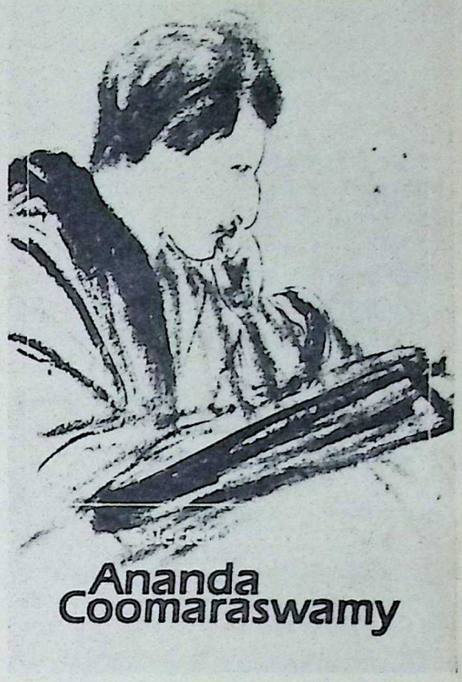
Great letters are not merely a source of historical illumination, but could also be viewed from a number of vantage points. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), has brought out two memorable collections of Letters: *Selected Letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy* and *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland*.

In her perceptive foreword Kapila Vatsyayan Director, Indira Gandhi Centre for the National Arts, New Delhi, writes that "to fulfil the need for renewed research for the whole, as also to stimulate further work with this free and catholic approach which is not imprisoned in the walls of ideology, the Kala Kosa Division of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts has initiated a programme of publication of works of critical scholarship, reprints and translations."

Kapila Vatsyayan goes on to say that the IGNCA "has chosen as one amongst its various programmes to reprint or translate works of writers, scholars, creative artists from all parts of the world who have searched for perennial sources and who have created bridges of communication between and amongst diverse traditions, civilizations, cultures and different orders of time—the path finders. . . . The first volume of the *Selected Letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy* reflects these concerns and commitments from one vantage point. The *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland* is the second in the series of letters of men of vision and reflection, creativity and socially responsible action."

Coomaraswamy's treasury of letters highlights the power of creative thinking in the spacious perspective of the tradition. Coomaraswamy's ability to switch from science to art history and again from art history through religion on to metaphysics revealed a type of the universal mind that was possible only to one whose mind was cast in the mould of the Renaissance and Post-Renaissance artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo and Goethe. However, viewed in historical perspective, it is clear that Coomaraswamy is, in a sense, the Renaissance Man in reverse; whereas the Renaissance was in many respects a process of secularization, the great importance of Coomaraswamy is that he was seeking to reaffirm the sacred nature of art and human crafts and activities within traditional cultures both of East and West. Just as S.H. Butcher described Aristotle's *poetics* as the criticism of "a Greek summing up Greek experience," so could Coomaraswamy's work be regarded as the contribution of a post-Renissance figure summing up pre-Renissance experience.

A. Ranganathan, director, Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation, is a freelance writer and critic.



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The remarkable thing about these letters is that each of them is a sort of "mini-essay" put forth in relatively easy language. Despite this, they cover almost every major line of thought that is developed in his published works. Those who would seek an introduction to the writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy could do no better than to start with this book.

From Preface to Selected Letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy

❖

Coomaraswamy regarded autobiographical writing as "a vulgar catering to illegitimate curiosity." Yet Coomaraswamy's Letters have been felicitously described by Whitall N. Perry as "the why and wherefore of Coomaraswamy's thought processes." Also as Eric Gill wrote to Coomaraswamy; "You hit bloody straight and bloody hard and bloody often." This volume contains Coomaraswamy's letters to a variety of men and women—his contemporaries, art historians, historians, literary celebrities, philosophers, Buddhist monks, Sanskritists and science hsitorians. The collection includes such famous names a Hermann Goetz, Eric Gill, Schweitzer, Aldous Huxley, T.S. Eliot, Muirhead, H.G. Rawlinson, Northrop, Needham, I.B. Horner, E.R. Dodds,

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The Coomaraswamy corpus is truly impressive. Interestingly, the nature of Coomaraswamy's achievement in the field of art criticism recalls the shaping of the Auden sensibility in the field of modern English poetry. For the relationship between the earlier revolutionary poetry of Auden and his later theological poetry is reminiscent of Coomaraswamy's migration from the state of Indian Nationalism into the shores of the Perennial Philosophy. And just as Auden's poetics flashed through *Beowulf* and *Troilus and Criseyde* to the contemporary English poets, so was Coomaraswamy's aesthetic imagination shaped by works ranging from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Shakespeare's Plays and Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Ashvagosha's *Buddha-Carita*, *Lankavatara Sutra* and Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*.

Let it be noted at the outset that Coomaraswamy cannot be lumped with those swamis East or West, or like types, who peddle a bogus "spirituality" that is vague, delusory and deciteful. I believe further that Coomaraswamy had no designs on us in the West except to return us to the sources of our own wisdom.

Ray Livingston in his Preface to his
The Traditional Theory of Literature

Again Coomaraswamy's contributions to the traditional theory of literature derived from the perennial streams of literary symbolism, aesthetic sensibility and aphoristic insight, entitle him to be ranked among the major figures in the history of literary criticism. To cite an example, Professor L.C. Knights' suggestive essay *King Lear as Metaphor* links Coomaraswamy's gloss on Hsieh Ho's concept of "Yun" in *The Transformation of Nature in Art* to the central thesis of Prof. Martin Foss' seminal work *Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience*. As Professor Knights has shown, Coomaraswamy's comparison of the Indian "dhvani" with the Chinese "Yun" suggests not only the concept of reverberation but also highlights the metaphoric process defined by Martin Foss as "a process of tension and energy." For Coomaraswamy's profoundly original interpretation of "dhvani" as the verbal noun "sounding" rather than the noun "sound" is present both in *Dhvanyaloka* and in Chinese aesthetics. And the appositeness of this concept resulting from the energy to hold in tension the apprehension of meanings in *King Lear* to Coomaraswamy's explication of "an echoing in the heart of the hearer" is a key to Professor Knights' understanding of King Lear as "a moving image of life... that sets in motion those powers of apprehension through which we simultaneously become aware of, and make our world."

Commenting on Coomaraswamy's philosophical and literary writings as well as the letters included in this volume, Mr Alvin Moore, Jr brilliantly argues that "a master of the language like Coomaraswamy can compensate for the undoubted deficiencies that centuries of secular usage have allowed to creep into what is now the world's premier international tongue." Here biography, history, inter-disciplinary scholarship and creative writing, derived from a profound attempt to understand the manifold meanings of sacred art, converge to form a new Coomaraswamy sensibility—at once literary and metaphysical. And this sensibility is relevant to the shaping of the English idiom in the twentieth century. For Coomaraswamy's mind was a perpetual chrestomathy which synthesized the different confluences of art, religion and literature, into a luminous prose of universal significance.

Coomaraswamy's letter to Hermann Goetz dated January 22, 1947, which is not only a gracious acknowledgement of the 1947 Goetz essay (this essay was sent by Dr Goetz to Coomaraswamy before it was published) but also an explication of Coomaraswamy's shift of interest from descriptive iconography to the seminal nature of iconographic development deserves to be quoted in this context: "You connect my change of interest from art history to metaphysics with age and no doubt that is in a measure true, though I would perhaps rather say 'maturity' than 'age'. However, I would also like to explain that this was also a natural and necessary development arising from my former work in which the iconographic interest prevails. . . I could not, of course, be satisfied with merely 'sociological' explanations since the forms of the traditional societies themeselves can only be explained metaphysically."

Coomaraswamy had an eye for detail, which made him a delightful letter-writer. Here is a description of Rajasthan in his letter (written on October 10, 1910) to Sir William Rothenstein "You must really go to Jodhpur to see the people . . . I should also recommend a night for a few hours at Ajmere to see the marble pavilions on the edge of the lake. Shah Jehan must have been a supreme artist—everything he had to do with is marvellous, and his reign marks the zenith of Mughal Art." And here is an extract from a letter to a friend which was written at a different level of perception: "I cannot, of course, agree with you that East is East and West is West, as was said by Kipling, of whom the late F.W. Bain remarked that "Hindu India was for him a book sealed with seven seals." There is, indeed, a gulf dividing what is 'modern' from what is truly Oriental; but that is not a geographical distinction, or one that could have been recognized before the fourteenth century." Elsewhere he wrote in the same strain: "You speak of your metaphysics as Western. You might just as well call your mathematics or chemistry Western. Such distinctions cannot be made."

Coomaraswamy's letter to Aldous Huxley is truly a vignette: "Regarding art" observed Coomaraswamy, "I do not myself see that Mayan art is devoid of sensuality. As for stylistic performance or change; one must, of course distinguish style from iconography; the latter can persist indefinitely, and even long after its reasons are no longer understood, the former always changes, so that even in what seem to be the most static cultures, works of art can be dated on stylistic grounds, if we know enough. There is no inherent necessity for iconographic change, because the forms maybe correct; accordingly in a living tradition one expects Plato's new songs, but not new kinds of music.' It is our sensitive rather than our intellectual nature that demands novelties; for the intellect, originality is all that is required." And characteristically, Coomaraswamy broke a lance with George Sarton who commented favourably on *The Transformation of Nature of Art* in a letter dated November 4, 1934: "You must not give me credit for the passage you approve of, in quite the way you do—I am 'dogmatic', in the technical as well as in the pejorative sense of the word, according to which latter sense you employ it. I regard the truth, in other words, as a matter of certainty, not of opinion. I am never expressing an opinion or personal view, but an orthodox one; I cannot say "I think," or "it seems to me."

In a letter to Dr Goetz dated November 1, 1944, Coomaraswamy argued that "the 'gulf' between East and West, while it is a present fact exists only as between the Modern West and the Surviving East." Small wonder that Coomaraswamy was greatly attracted by Blake, whose ethereal illustrations in his Prophetic Books are reminiscent of mediaeval manuscript illustrations.

The letters reveal Rolland's deepest perceptions of the arts, and a delicacy of inter-personal sensitivity, that is profoundly moving. After reading only a small selection of these letters, one feels one has touched the man; just as it is clear that the man had touched and been touched by those with whom he was corresponding.

—*From Kapila Vatsyayan's Foreword to*
Selected Letters of Romain Rolland

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Just as the first volume of the IGNCA containing the *Selected Letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy* highlights the epic grandeur of the Perennial Philosophy in its manifold aspects, so does the second IGNCA volume of the *Selected Letters of Romain Rolland* reflect the various dimensions of the East-West Cultural Dialogue which began with Ampere. Indeed it may be recalled that Andre Marie Ampere (1775–1836), a celebrated French mathematician and physicist who was the first to propound the electrodynamic theory, wrote to Victor Marie Hugo (1802–1885), an eminent French poet, novelist and dramatist that "Indian Culture will occupy the attention of our century and those following as much as Greek culture occupied the sixteenth century."

The East-West Cultural Dialogue to Romain Rolland—who, incidentally, got the Nobel Literature prize in 1915—was essentially a concern of the inner self, contributing to a spiritual quest which lifts the mechanics of living above bovine existence in order to give meaning to life and confidence to new adventures of the mind. "Swami Vivekananda's words" proclaimed Romain Rolland "are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses." And in his Introduction to the first edition of Coomaraswamy's *The Dance of Shiva*, Romain Rolland commented: "I do not suggest that Europeans should embrace an Asiatic faith, I would merely invite them to taste the delight of this rhythmic philosophy, this deep, slow breath of thought."

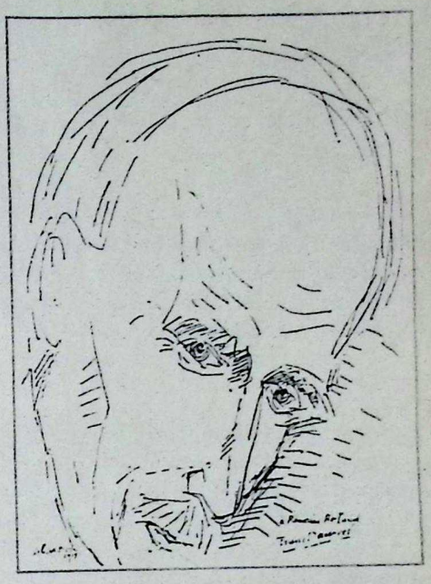
The letters are so arranged and so inter-related in the wake of the admirable editing of Francis Dore and Marie-Laure Prevost, that one is able to perceive three themes. One can note Romain Rolland's understanding of the "stirring rhythms" of Indian thought in his letters to Rabindranath Tagore, Kalidas Nag, the French Association of the Friends of Orient, Amiya Chakravarthy and Leo Tolstoy. Similarly one can understand the Rolland conception of India's "rhythmic philosophy" in his letters to Madeleine Slade (affectionately known as Mira Behn) and Dilip Kumar Roy. And Rolland's conceptualization of the theme of "oppressive violence of human society as it exists at present" is indicated in his letters to Albert Schweitzer, Paul Seippel Henri Barbusse, Raimund Eberhard, Louis Ferriere and Mahatma Gandhi.

This publication is a fitting climax to the Festival of India which concluded in January 1990. For it is well-known that the Indo-French Cultural Dialogue, visualized by Ampere and begun by Anquetil Duperron's Latin translation of Dara Shukoh's Persian translation of the Upanishads entitled the *Oupnekhat* and sustained by the travelogues of Bernier and Tavernier, Dubois' sociological document *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, Toru Dutt's transcreations entitled *A Sheaf Gleaned From French Fields* and the Gandhi-Rolland Letters—is a continuing process. ❑

Addressed to a wide range of correspondents from Leo Tolstoy to Albert Schweitzer, Paul Seippel, Pastor Louis Ferriere, and Barbusse, the theme of 'oppressive violence of human society as it exists at present', is the unifying thread. The correspondence with Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi represents this gradual transition, from intensity to a quiet fluid probing into the nature of man, the creative process and the place of the socially responsible citizen in the modern world, along with an inner life of reflection.

At no time was he an ivory tower intellectual. he was concerned not just to create art, but how to live his life. And it became even more apparent in his later equally impassioned stance against the rising tide of Nazism in Europe and in support of the Indian struggle for independence.

—*From Kapila Vatsyayan's Foreword to* Selected Letters of Romain Rolland



Selected Letters of
Romain Rolland

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Bilingualism and the Creative Writer in India

Mridula Garg

Mridula Garg

This review article is based on the lectures delivered by the author at a seminar organised by the Centre for South Asian Studies, UCLA, Berkeley, and Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts, in April this year.

A creative writer is like a lonely traveller, who travels along the path of existing reality but with his eyes fixed far ahead. He tends to see the bifurcations and the by-passes before the main road. Not only that. He has the audacity to venture into them. He sees all that is happening in the obscure pathways but more than that he sees all that may possibly happen at a future point of time; all that could have happened in the past and all that has not happened but should. In other words, he sees a reality that he himself creates which does not lie parallel to the existing reality but at an indeterminate and changing angle to it.

Every artist creates in accordance with his personal vision. It may or may not be close to a conceptual idea already expounded by someone but it can never be identical to it.

The fact that a writer grasps reality in its multi-faceted form is true of all cultures. But it acquires an almost desperate quality in India, where the social reality is not merely multi-faceted but vitiated and corrupted by the historical process. If we dare face the truth we have to acknowledge that there is no distinct civilization to which we can claim to belong today, unless we say that we are the inheritors of a synthesis of the Western and the Indian civilization. But to say that is to believe in a lie. Every thinker and writer knows it to be a lie. There can never be an absolute or perfect synthesis of two diverse cultures. All it can at best produce is an attempt at synthesis, which releases two or more equally strong pulls. Pulling the country and the people in opposite directions, it exercises a constant strain on the social fabric and national cohesion. The affluent have the means to propagate their culture. But being rootless, they are unable or unwilling to do so. The others who are rooted do not have the means. They have also been taught to envy the rootless for their affluence, so they become as unwilling as they are powerless to absorb the prosperous minority in their fold. We know that we live not in one but two Indias. One is scientifically conscious, technologically ambitious, rich, well equipped and ostentatious. The other is primitive, poor, devoid of the basic amenities of life and fatalist. One is eager to rule nature, indulging in an untramelled rape of the environment, new rich style. The other is totally at the mercy of nature and constantly subdued and punished by it. One is rootless and clings to material goods to gain some modicum of stability. The other is firmly entrenched in the earth and does not have the wherewithal to seek transplanation in fresh pastures. Yet it is the rooted who are forever being uprooted and forced to migrate and become refugees, because of the greed of those who chose to be rootless in the first place.

This is the reality that a writer in India has to face. And it is this reality that has given rise to a forced bilingualism, which makes him choose between writing in English or his own mother tongue. First let us see what bilingualism is and why I say it is forced. There is a vital difference between being a linguist and being bilingual in the Indian context. To know two or more languages by choice is one thing and to be forced to know two by the exigencies of history is quite another. There are more than 21 languages in India but most people are content to know only 2. Of these only one is the language of the majority in that linguistic group; the other is always English. During the British rule it was learnt out of administrative necessity; now out of the desire to earn one's bread with extra dabs of butter away from those who do not have enough bread. The educated minority, which includes writers, constantly uses the unlettered majority as the dominant character in its creative work. But it does not participate in its struggle to subsist in an economically and politically hostile world. The rootless minority cannot survive culturally without continuous reference to the very people it rejects and opresses. The majority, on the other hand, cannot survive economically without making compromises with the minority whom it envies but cannot understand. There exist, then, two distinct cultures, two sets of values and two divergent standards of living in confrontation and compromise. The pull of the alien culture strengthens itself mainly by the economic power it commands; while the pull of the slowly eroding old culture derives its strength from the sheer numbers that belong to it; the long history that has bred it and the depth of the roots that attach it to mother earth. Even if the erosion of the old culture continues unabated, it will take ages for the process to be completed. It would then leave behind a vacuum, not a cohesive social entity.

So the two cultures continue to exist without synthesising. One feeds on the other and at the same time negates it. The opposing pulls actually disrupt rather than nurture the process of synthesis.

Under these circumstances, a writer has two options open to him. One, to create a reality where the opposing pulls of actual life are smoothed out and a synthesised culture arrived at. It may then be projected as the Utopian resolution and ways and means demonstrated for attaining the seemingly impossible ideal. The other, to recognise that it is impossible to synthesise without producing a vitiated synthetic culture. In that case, he would have to reject the present day reality and explore a number of options as its alternative. To do that he will have to take the readers into confidence. He will have to offer them not a ready-made solution but ask them to come with him on an arduous and sometimes inconsequential exploration of paths, which they have to find for themselves, at least some of the time.

These two options arise from two different ways of looking at reality. They produce two different kinds of literature. I would like to call them literature of the spectator mentality and that of the participant mentality. Most Indian writing in English is of the spectator mentality. Most, not all. Let us see why?

The pressure to learn English comes not only from the desire for social prestige but also because most higher, scientific and technical education uses it as its medium. It is logical to try to learn it from early childhood in primary schools to cope better with the demands made on its knowledge later in life.

Whenever a plea is made to impart higher or technical education through the mother tongues in India, it is said that English has to be used because enough technical teaching material is not available in the other languages. But no such literature can become available because all those capable of writing it have been educated via English and consider themselves proficient in it.

Mridula Garg is a prolific writer in Hindi and English and has published several novels, collections of short stories and plays.

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A time has come when no original work can be done in the mother tongues because the technically trained people are not taught through them. And they cannot be taught through them because no original work has been done in them. Those who say that the government should first provide teaching material before allowing the use of the mother tongues betray the stagnation of their minds. The government can only provide translations of the English works which are already in use and not original works. That will serve no purpose as far as the ability to think innovatively is concerned.

The use of the mother tongue has to be introduced at the earlier stages with progressive upgrading to higher stages of education, if we want to motivate a continuous flow of thought.

Generally speaking, we can say that bilingualism gives rise to two disadvantageous situations. First, it divides the people by creating an artificial barrier of language and hampers free flow of equal opportunity to all. Second, it encourages imitation and obstructs innovation and original thought. It does so in an insidious manner by penetrating the psyche of the child. If it was an onslaught on the adults, it could at least be identified and opposed. But it is the child who is the victim. It creates a divide between his emotional affinity with the immediate world around him and the opportunistic expediency dictated by his guardians. In the process it strikes at the root of the future flowering of original thought.

Language should come to the child like air to be breathed and imbibed with unconscious ease. Learning the spoken language is not conscious education for him but a part of growing up like crawling, walking, cutting teeth and uttering the first word. From that first utterance till he knows enough words to give expression to a variety of feelings, words surround him like the buzzing of common household mosquitoes. He learns them with the effortless and joyous sense of being one with his environment. The process leaves him free to experiment with thought, feeling and logic. He does not have to expend his early fund of curiosity and memory on consciously learning a language.

If, however, his early schooling is to be through English, he has to chain in his curiosity and shift to learning a language which is not even close to his mother tongue in idiom and syntax. English requires not only a different grammar but a totally different pronunciation. Even before he has learnt to enunciate clearly, he is expected to make sounds totally alien to his grasp of the way people around him speak. Not only that, he has to come to terms with a new awareness. There is a feeling of anxiety and inferiority associated with learning this language that gets conveyed from the parent and the teacher to the child. They are themselves unsure of knowing or speaking it correctly. But they want the child to speak it faultlessly for in it lies the hope of economic and social advancement. The stress is on learning, speaking and writing "correct" English though no one knows exactly what is "correct."

The creative writer's plight is not very different from that of the child. He is faced with a situation, where each accuses the other of speaking and writing incorrectly because, at heart, everyone nurses a secret anxiety that he himself may prove incorrect. The greatest fear of the experts of the language is that they may be guilty of "Indian English." Worse than the wife commiting adultery. But nobody quite knows what is Indian English. All too often have I been told by critics, publishers and translaters that we must take utmost care to avoid Indianisms. I have never understood this admonition. If Indianism is to be avoided,

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how can an Indian write? Why should he write? What is Indianism? Is it not the essence of one's expression as an Indian? Is it something the grammarian or the philologist can dictate or is it an undefinable feeling, a way of life, an expression of one's being in its diverse avtars? One person's Indianism may be quite different, even contradictory, to another's; yet both can be the true expression of their Indianness. Without this Indianism in language, which is the expression of Indianness, what is Indian writing worth? Let us say, writing is a love child born out of the ecstatic union between intense experience and passionate expression. The admonitions of a chaperon for correct behaviour may lead to an abortion or stop conception altogether but it can never bring about the joyous birth of a unique being.

Experience is always attached to the soil, so must expression be. There is no such thing as a pan-world work of literature. We all know there is no work that can even be called pan-Indian or pan-American, at the time of its creation. A writer has to draw upon his own experience or at best a finite perception of the reality for his creation. Every literary work is rooted in the individual writer's geography and history.

Shorn of the intimate minutiae of experienced reality, an idea is just an idea. It cannot become a work of art or literature, unless living beings play it out in life. No living being can exist without history and geography. Even an idea needs words. A work of literature needs language and it is the only tool the writer has. Language is not a scientifically arranged or erratically chosen jumble of words but the receptacle of the essence of the mores, feelings, passions, sensibility and culture developed over centuries. It is the expression of the identity of a writer, both individually and as a being operating in a definite social and historical milieu. He need not accept this milieu. He may be in violent revolt to it. But he has to operate from within it. To express his revolt, he needs a language that immediately conveys the special meaning associated with the words he uses in his particular historicity. Hence the English an Indian writer uses can never be anything but Indian English, at least a writer who is not reconciled to being an exile. A language can cope with feelings of revolt, it usually thrives on it, but not with bewilderment. Confusion of meaning between the written word, with its historically acquired connotations and nuances and the sensibility of the writer can only lead to a crisis of identity. So the only real choice an Indian writer has is between writing in Indian English or his mother tongue.

We must remember that a crisis of identity is distinct from a search of identity. A search indicates positiveness. It leads to the forging of new ideas into a coherent body of thought through experimentation with new forms, themes and value systems.

It is synonymous with a desire for change, which may lead to active rebellion or a gradual veering away from conformity. The search degenerates into confusion and bewilderment when the visions of the past, the present and the future get fragmented in a manner that there is no hope of integration between them. The crisis comes when one is sucked into the whirlpool of borrowed ideas, adapted themes and stolen experiments. It makes no difference then, whether one uses a language, one was forced to borrow under social, economic and political pressure with an inherent sense of inferiority and inexpertise i.e. English. Or the language one had grown with but was taught to despise as inferior by inuendo or outright comdemnation i.e. the mother tongue. In both cases, one is assailed with a sense of inferiority and inadequacy which results either in bravado or apologia. In either case, it leads to a collapse of the

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roots of identity. Not sure where to begin the search, one gives it up altogether.

But not writing. Writers are resilient beings. They do not give up writing easily. Some thrash around in the thickets of confusion but manage to have brief bursts of vision. Some conjure up paths out of the dreams of old and pierce the darkness with the light of their vision. But such people are few and far between. Most of them stop looking and assume there is no way out. In fact as soon as one stops looking, there ceases to be a way out. Once the area of darkness is accepted as a given state, people can feel only two things, nostalgia and hopelessness.

Nostalgia is for a past they do not fully remember or comprehend but would like to, in order to overcome their sense of inferiority before other writers in other cultures. They set out to fashion the past on the basis of half-remembered snatches of reality experienced in early childhood. It is built upon by reading the works of people, who had also never experienced it but had been fascinated by what they had in turn read. They fondly imagine that they would have been happy in that twilight world of dreams had they gained access to it. Or not abandoned it in early childhood. Such nostalgia is usually overdone, the whole passionate exercise being an escape from the acceptance of a loss of identity. This is most assiduously cultivated by those who write in English, from Raja Rao to Anita Desai. But it is not their sole preserve. We have enough writers in Hindi, who keep crying for the loss of an ideal village community that never was. One has only to read Premchand or Sarat Chandra to realise that the ideal village never existed. One manifestation of this nostalgia is an increasing use of the local dialects in the making of Hindi fiction. The young writers who claim direct descendency from Premchand tend to pick their characters from the villages or the city slums, where the migrants from the villages live. But since their knowledge of their lives stems from a distanced point in time and space, they substitute or supplement it with a heavy dose of the dialect.

The use of the dialect is nothing new. It has been used right from Fanishwar Nath Renu (*Maila Aanchal*), Krishna Sobti (*Zindginama*), Himanshu Joshi (*Kagar ki Aag*), Manjul Bhagat (*Anaro*) to Mrinal Pande (*Patrangpur Puran*), Abdul Bismillah (*Jheeni-Jheeni Beeni Chadariya*), Sanjeev (*Panv Tale ki Doob*) and a host of upcoming writers. But the reach and depth of the writer's participation in the lives and times of his characters is different in each case, not only in degree but in kind. Whereas Renu and Bhagat live the lives of their protagonists, Bismillah remains largely a reporter as do young writers like Shivmurti, Suranjan and many others.

The test I apply is to translate the story into a simple everyday Hindi, (I concede that it can be done only partially) and then see whether it could still move me or was it only the dialect weaving an exotica. On that basis I can say that while *Patrangpur Puran* remained just as fresh without the dialect, *Kagar ki Aag* lost most of its novelty. Chitra Mudgal's stories *Bhookh* and *Lane*, Punni Singh's *Morcha* or Sailesh Pandit's *Vande Bhagwati* would have been more communicable and effective without the overdose of the dialect, which was a deterrent rather than a help. In Manjul Bhagat's case, while the touches of the dialect add to the credibility of *Anaro*, in some of her other stories e.g. *Guldupahariya*, its use detracts from the effectiveness of the narrative.

It is interesting to note that English phrases are now being used quite as often as those from other dialects in the Hindi text, even when the characters are all Indians. Unfortunately but not surprisingly the phrases used are, more often than not, bookish, unnecessary or overworked cliches so that they subtract rather than add to the power of the narrative e.g. "Don't kill me with kindness (*Ganit Gyan* by Raji Seth—cliche). "Excuse me, please, whether bus number triple six is gone" (*Ramsajivan Ki Premkatha* by Uday Prakash—bookish though used by a girl who had studied in England!). "She is shocked. It will take time to recover, poor child!" (*Ek Asamapt Katha*, Sumati Ayyar—unnecessary use of English.)

> *Generally speaking, we can say that bilingualism gives rise to two disadvantageous situations. First, it divides the people by creating an artificial barrier of language and hampers free flow of equal opportunity to all. Second, it encourages imitation and obstructs innovation and original thought. It does so in an insidious manner by penetrating the psyche of the child. If it was an onslaught on the adults, it could at least be identified and opposed. But it is the child who is the victim. It creates a divide between his emotional affinity with the immediate world around him and the opportunistic expediency dictated by his guardians. In the process it strikes at the root of the future flowering of original thought.*

There is nothing right or wrong in the use of dialect per se. But it has both a positive and a negative side.

On the positive side, it leads to an enrichment of the Hindi language. One may well consider English as "it is spoke" in India, a kind of dialect, perchance of the elite. But it gets assimilated into the Indian consciousness only when it is Indianised by the so-called illiterate or semi-educated masses. They also manage to absorb it into the local language without breaking its rhythm or undermining the aesthetic quality. Sharad Joshi gives an interesting example of how 'nervous' has become 'nurbhus' in Bihar and 'Hindised', shall we say, to become part of Bhojpuri. "Kaahe nurbhusai rahe ho" (why be nervous) does not allow the word 'nervous' to break the fluidity of the sentence. Whichever dialect we use, it makes a positive contribution to literary evolution and even a particular work, in that it enlivens the language and helps in establishing the georgaphical location of the characters.

But it has a negative aspect which must not be lost sight of. It is this side which tends to gain an upper hand, when the writer operates in a vitiated reality. Most present day writers remain content with the superficial display of empathy for the so-called silent majority, expressed through speaking their dialect. They do not try to go deeper. They fail to explore their psyche or the complexity of their reality and also to experiment with content and form. One reason for their complacency is the unfortunate fact that most Hindi lecturer-cum-critics are quick to hail these writers as socially conscious spokesmen of the silent majority. It is not silent really, only we do not care to hear it long enough to penetrate its words and reach a deeper understanding.

We would do well to remember that Premchand, the father of socially committed realism in Hindi literature himself wrote a simple Hindi, uncluttered with consciously chosen dialect terms. Nor did he switch from one dialect to another with each of his characters. They were allowed to express differences in traits, social standing and location within more or less the same language. There were differences of nuances, etc., naturally and a use of a less or more educated form of dialogue but not total dependence on dialect.

The conscious use of the dialect often breeds a false sense of satisfaction at being a rebel. Whether the writer is actually one or not will depend upon whether he suffers from a real or affected sense of hopelessness and disillusionment.

What then is the difference between genuine and affected disillusionment? To my mind it is of vital importance in the making of literature.

True disillusionment is always first and foremost with oneself. A protestation of disillusionment with everything and everyone else but oneself is an affectation.

Affected hopelessness suits those who are afraid of participation. Nirad Choudhery, Naipaul and Ved Mehta are masters of this genre. Others follow in their footsteps. But it is not the monopoly of those who write in English. The Hindi writers practise it just as well. The only difference is that while Hindi writers bemoan the loss of values and national character in the present generation; the writers in English see it in all the generations from

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the beginning of time, in the dark continent of Asia. Or shall I say brown continent. Particularly those who are happy exiles in safe havens of affluence. They try to pretend that they are different. But they do not fool anybody, least of all themselves. That is why they have to borrow the form for the expression of their hopelessness from the West, which has made quite an art of it since World War Two. A genuine feeling of disillusionment with values and oneself has a way of bouncing out of the pit by producing experimental art in its search for something different and new. Hopelessness and hope move in cycles like the Keynesian economic cycle of booms and depressions. We have always known it in India. But it is not very fashionable to behave according to what one has always known. Affectation of disillusionment on the other hand, pulls one further into the pit by the weight of imitative forms, cliched idioms and borrowed themes without style that it imposes upon its exponents.

The question then comes full circle to that of the writer being a participant or a spectator. Most Indian writing in English, I feel is of the spectator variety. All one can say of the literature in the mother languages is that at least some of it is participatory in nature. The dalit literature of Marathi is a case in point. But there are other such works e.g. *Itivrata* (novel by Jagdamba Prasad Dixit) or *Anayaas* (novel by Yogesh Gupt). There are also a large number of novels written on the middle class women by women writers e.g. *Anaro* (Manjul Bhagat), *Tatsam* (Raji Seth), *Beghar* (Mamta Kalia), *Aapka Banti* (Mannu Bhandari), *Ek Apni Zamin* (Chitra Mudgal) and so on, in which the writers participate fully in the lives of their pratagonists.

I believe that the more one shifts from being a bystander to a fellow traveller, the more meaningful is the literature one creates. That is my value judgement. Each of you is free to make your own. That is the whole point of literature. Everyone is free to interpret reality according to his or her personal vision. Come to think of it, every novel, story or drama is in some way a distortion of reality because it is based on a personal and limited experience and vision of reality. But it is this personal intensity of experience and its interpretation according to a distinct world view which ultimately makes us understand the total reality. There is nothing paradoxical in it. The readers (society) get an intense and participatory knowledge of the total reality by absorbing a number of personal accounts of it, some of which cancel and some reinforce others. The greater the participation of the writer, the deeper is the participatory understanding of the reader.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise once more that there is a cruciual difference between choosing to write in a language other than one's mother tongue like R.K. Narayan or Manoj Das in Jayant Mahapatra and being forced to do so because of extraneous factors. The difference is the same as that between knowing two languages equally well and not knowing either well enough to dispel feelings of anxiety about its use. There have been any number of writers who have written in both English and French, from Samuel Becket to Raymond Federman. Similarly there are Indian writers who write in two Indian languages like Bengali and Hindi or even in English and one Indian language by choice and are equally fluent in it. But even in the case of a writer of Tagore's repute, the English versions come nowhere near the Bengali works in lyricism and power. A few bilingual writers in India may also be competent linguists. But they are rare. The large body of them write with some degree of anxiety, which hampers a free flow of creativity.

What is the solution of the problem of bilingualism? I guess we will either have to settle for an Indian English that can be picked up by everyone or regain pride in our mother tongue. Otherwise the scenario is bleak. ❑

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PAMELA KANWAR is Associate Professor of History at the Institute of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, and a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. She has published papers in national and international journals, and her current research deals with aspects of the western Himalaya.

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An Interview with Qurratulain Hyder

Masooma A. Khan

Qurratulain Hyder is the recipient of the Bharatiya Jnan Pith award for 1990.

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At one time it was thought that neither the number nor the quality of Urdu novel would raise it to world class literature. But during the last few years, great strides have been made by Urdu fiction in which some outstanding writers have produced very distinguished work. Qurratulain Hyder is, without doubt, at the head of the steady progress of Urdu fiction in contemporary times. Born and brought up in an educated, liberal and enlightened atmosphere, her creative genius flourished through times marked with significant social changes in India as well as in the rest of the world. Her life and times have been full of dramatic socio-political changes like World War II, great technological advancement, rapid industrial and educational growth and cultural revolutions all over the world. A writer of her intelligence and sensitivity cannot remain untouched by such happenings. Living in a literary atmosphere, she received significant creative impressions from them though she always maintained the detachment which is a necessary part of creative activity.

Born in Aligarh to Syed Sajjad Hyder and Begum Nazar Sajjad Hyder, both well known writers of their time, Qurratulain was educated at Lucknow's Isabella Thoburn Women's College. She obtained her Master's degree in English Literature from Lucknow University. She glided into a literary career even while a student. Her first short story was published in *Humayun* when she was barely sixteen and she has moved only in one direction—forward—since then. Her first collection of short stories was published in 1947, its title being *Sitaron se Aagey*. It was followed by her first novel *Mere Bhi Sanamkhane* in 1949. Another novel *Safeena-e-Ghame-Dill* and a book of short stories *Sheeshay ka Ghar* followed in 1952 and '54 respectively. In 1958 she published a successful translation of Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* under the title *Hum Hi Chirag, Hum Hi Parvanay*. By this time she was already established as a good writer but her name spread far and wide with her trail blazing novel *Aag ka Dariya* in 1959. Since then she has produced successful and phenomenally popular novels like *Kaar-e-Jahan Daraaz Hai Aakhire Shab ke Hamsafar, Roshni ki Raftar* and *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman*. There are some more remarkable short novels and collections of short stories like *Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Keejo* and *Patjhar ki Awaz* in the list.

Aag ka Dariya is a panoramic chronicle of the history of the Indian subcontinent from ancient to recent times. She evolved consistently after this novel and her abundant talent revealed itself in a distinct, fresh and unique experiment each time.

Qurratulain Hyder has a panoramic imagination. The canvas of her novels is vast. Even within the scope of one plot long geographical distances are covered. Gifted with a high intellectual level, she is sensitive, informed and aware. Not only is she extremely well read but also very alive to the real life around her. Issues emerging out of contemporary social problems dominate her work. We all know that the world is becoming a smaller place everyday and a cosmopolitan order is fast emerging. The novels of Qurratulain Hyder present it to the best. Problems of secularism and communalism are treated by her as human occurrences, she knits such themes in the fabric of her narrative without getting obsessive about them. Her characters are close to life, vividly realized through skillful presentation.

Qurratulain Hyder is often charged with delving deep into a particular kind of nostalgia for a decadent kind of life. However, it is not a limitation. Her plots incorporate the life of the upper classes in a convincing manner. She speaks of her own experiences honestly. In her scheme both the elite and the underdog are worthy of equal attention as they form a part of her narrative structure. A sense of history is an integral part of her collective achievement. She infuses serious themes with humour, irony, nostalgia and melancholy by turns. Remembrances of past and present surface again and again in her novels.

Meeting Qurratulain is full of surprises. She has agreed to meet you after expressing her weariness having given so many interviews to papers who have not exactly presented her well. But by the time you settle down to talk, all your apprehensions about meeting a highly strung, sensitive and formidable personality melt away.

Qurratulain Hyder is informal and friendly. She is a great talker in the sense that she has interesting things to say with effortless ease. She talks about herself, yes (that is what you have gone there for) but she is not pompous or obsessive about herself and her work. There is a kind of energy about her, a certain informed grace which you cannot label "old world charm" because she is full of exuberance and her outlook on life is modern. Talking to her about subjects literary, one cannot help noticing what a human person she is. She breaks the conversation to go and switch on the T.V. for her woman servant Bua's favourite "Chitrahaar" at 8.00 P.M. She is interested in you as a person, too. In fact she dislikes being taken as a writer, "because I don't think of myself as a writer first. Why can't I be taken as a human being first? Some people give themselves too many airs and much importance as writers. They sit and give statements, propound philosophies and pontificate over everything. I don't like projecting myself, that is why I don't go to T.V."

Once the interviews is over, the conversation continues. She shows you some rare and interesting artefacts and tells how, and where she acquired them. She is interested in a lot of things—people, places, books, happenings. You can well believe it when she says, "Ask my close friends, my relatives, if I discuss my work with them and they'll say no. There is so much more going on in the world." Contrary to popular belief, she is not a loner. She is a gregarious person and likes to meet people. Gifted with a photographic memory, she finds it helpful to store images and record events which are manifested in her writings as she goes from strength to strength.

Q. *What are your views on contemporary Indian Literature?*

A. This is a vast subject and it is impossible to make a brief comment on it. Indian Literature is not just one entity. India, with its rich and diverse culture and numerous languages has produced excellent literature. Collectively, Indian literature is dynamic. It is modern. It is contemporary. There are so many good writers today. We are proud of people like R.K. Narayan and so many others.

Q. *How about writers like Ved Mehta and V.S. Naipaul?*

A. They write basically for a western readership. They cater to a certain kind of market by ridiculing India. They make fun of their country and culture so that their works sell.

Q. *How will you place Urdu fiction in world literature?*

A. I cannot give a general answer to this question. To start with I have no inferiority complex vis a vis my culture, language or literature. Evaluating one literature in terms of another calls for comparison. It is not fair to compare literature of two or more languages which are totally different in their cultural background, imagery and style and then say which is better. Then you get to know other literatures through translation. Now, you just cannot translate a poet like Meer Anees into English. Urdu poetry just cannot retain its unique characteristics if translated into English or any other European language. In my view translating Ghalib and Iqbal into English is impossible. In fiction too the

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difference of idiom remains. What is effective and powerful in the original often makes no impact when presented in another language.

Q. *Are Urdu writers today concerned with contemporary issues and social problems?*

A. Urdu writers have always been involved with relevant contemporary issues from the very beginning. Socio-political problems have always been part of Urdu literature from the 19th century down to the present times. Urdu writers have been sensitive to, aware of and fully involved with problems of their times. Poetry and fiction have both been used as effective mediums by them. For example in prose the entire Sir Saiyad groups, younger generation of M.A.O. College, Aligarh, Prem Chand and then the Progressive Writers—they have all contributed to the production of serious and meaningful literature in Urdu. Even a cursory survey of Urdu literature will prove it to be a true mirror of its time.

Q. *What are the issues that disturb/attract you in the context of the present times?*

A. All contemporary issues interest or disturb me as they do every thinking person. But what really disturbs me at present is the ever rising communalism. I'm specially concerned about the increasing communalism among the educated. Another thing that upsets me specially is violence, increasing violence.

Q. *It is widely known that you have inherited a literary legacy from your parents but what are your independent sources of inspiration?*

A. Everybody asks me this question but it is difficult to answer. Identifying my independent sources of inspiration is not easy for me. In writing there is no 'modus operandi'. You have ideas, you have imagination and a talent for expressing them effectively. I write as a matter of course, it comes naturally to me. However, I do not depend on writing for a living. I have always worked for a living. In India you cannot survive on your writing. There is no question of earning your living through writing here as in the west. In other countries a best selling author would be a multi-millionaire but in India we do not have a royalty culture, especially in Urdu.

Q. *The characters in your novels are life like. Do you fashion them on actual people or are they totally imaginary?*

A. Creative process is complex and cannot be explained in a few words. Perhaps it cannot be explained at all. You get some of your characters at the take off point from actual people you have met, or seen or heard about. Many of such characters become composite during the progress of the work. However most of my characters are totally imaginary. The life-like quality of my characters often makes people ask me this question. Why I don't give credit to the writer's imagination and the ability to create characters? This is ridiculous. There is such a thing as a writer's imagination and creativity. Why do these people think that every character is based on real people including the author himself or herself.

Q. *Do you treat your characters impartially in the sense that you take equal pains on the presentation of male and female characters?*

A. Naturally. I take equal interest in my characters, male or female. But a novel is not a piece of real life. I place and present men and women impartially. However, I agree that in my novels I treat women more sympathetically because women usually get a raw deal in life especially in our society.

Q. *What has been the role of critics and readers in establishing your position as a top novelist in Urdu?*

A. Personally, many progressive critics from the word go denounced me. My very first short story written when I was about sixteen and published in 1944 was attacked for a very silly reason. It was the time of the Progressive Movement and there I was writing about the upper class instead of the peasants. How could I write about the peasants when I knew nothing about them? Some critics have always been against me. Others, the pseudo-intellectuals are ever ready to find fault with my work. There are others who have no real understanding of fiction.

Reader response to me has always been overwhelming. That is what matters. I have been a trend setter in the writing of fiction. I am aware of having influenced generation after generation of sensitive writers and readers during the last forty years.

Q. *There was a controversy over the freedom of expression sometime ago. Could you comment on the government censorship and authorial freedom?*

A. I certainly do not approve of any curbs on the freedom of expression from the official government agencies. But there is such a thing as self censorship. Writing is a responsible occupation. You can not incite people in the name of freedom of expression. For example, one should not write to incite communal passions, or propagate other negative ideas and attitudes. One should not attack religion or religious personalties. Obviously you cannot go around writing and propagating porn, or dishing out tracts on fascism and other obnoxious attitudes, can you?

Q. *Following the Jnanpith Award you have been interviewed by all major publications in India. Sometimes your comments were distorted and you were misquoted. Would you like to comment on it?*

A. Yes. I had a stream of young journalists visiting me following the announcement of the Jnanpith Award. However, it made me sad to see the copy some of them produced. They were enthusiastic but they ended up writing totally nonsensical things which could only be attributed to the falling standards of journalistic ethics. For instance I talked to the *Sunday Observer* correspondent Alka Singh in my study as it was too hot in the living room. As it happened a lady who had arrived from Aligarh was taking a nap on a camp cot in the room. Now, Alka Singh merrily reported that I lay on the camp cot as I answered her questions. I think it was a very stupid thing to say. She also said that I had received the Padmabhushan award. How could I ever say I got a Padmabhushan when I have not? There were many other misrepresentations in other papers but I can't recollect them now. Yes, the biggest howler was in a Hindi magazine where the headlines screamed "Aam Aadmi Mera Vishay Kabhi Nahin Raha" (Common Man Has Never Been My Subject) when I have made no such assertions.

I also got very irritated with correspondents who would harp on the facts of my being a Muslim and a woman. They would ask me questions on Salman Rushdie, Kashmir Problem and Shah Bano case for no other reason except that I was a Muslim. Not only did I not answer these questions but also gave them a piece of my mind.

Q. *Would you comment on the scope of your latest novel,* Chandni Begum?

A. *Chandni Begum* has been published. It is the story of contemporary Lucknow—Lucknow of the 1980s. The theme is basically the possession of land. Present day political situation is the setting of my narrative. The central character is a victim of circumstances. It is a long novel—about 425 pages.

Q. *Has your work been translated into other languages? Do you consider translation a satisfactory alternative to the original or do you think that the original work suffers through translation?*

A. Actually prose generally lends itself to translation easily but my novels are not easy to translate because of the Urdu idiom and subtle nuances of the language and also because of the dialect I often use. Much of the original flavour evaporates through translation. I like to translate my own work into English but I have made no efforts to get my work translated into other languages as I am bone lazy. Also I do not give too much importance to myself as a writer. A European novel translated into English retains its original freshness because it pertains to a common culture. If you are part of the same culture, ideas are easy to convey and easy to translate into another language. In my view, Indian literature will suffer through translation because of the diversity of idiom and varied local culture even within the country. Urdu and Persian poetry definitely suffer through translation because the allusions in them appear exotic and strange to the alien reader. ❑

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Qurratulain Hyder

An Interview with Sukrita Paul Kumar

This is an extract from *Conversations on Modernism* published by Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

Sukrita Kumar: A lot of thinking and writing has been done by philosophers and literary critics on the specific experience of "loneliness" of a creative artist. I should like to begin our discussion by focussing your attention on the peculiar sense of loneliness that you may have encountered by virtue of the fact, that not only are you a creative writer, you also happen to be writing in Urdu in India—a language which has a comparatively limited readership here and therefore you may be pushed into a greater sense of exclusiveness. It would be interesting, I feel, to have your response to this—how conscious are you to this 'situation' of yours and have you done any thinking on this subject? Do you have any specific experiences related to this feature?

Qurratulain Hyder: You have asked two questions, one is regarding the loneliness of the creative writer. Though this may sound rather pompous, let's face it, it is very much there. It has always been there with an artist anywhere in the world. A writer writes in isolation. The loneliness of a western writer of course brings in a sociological aspect.

SK: . . . that perhaps we can take up later.

QH: Yes, we are not concerned with that now. You have got another point—the loneliness of a woman-writer. Well, a woman writer, whether in the West or here in the East is more or less in an identical situation. In the East perhaps, it's slightly worse. And then, to make it even more accentuated, you say, loneliness of a woman writer in Urdu. That makes the question more loaded, and, to top it all, a woman writer's loneliness writing *in Urdu* in India. Ah-well, perhaps it is not really all that bad! Writing in Urdu in India makes no difference because writing in Urdu in Canada, Pakistan or anywhere else, according to me, would not change the situation. And then, a woman writing in Urdu in India or a man writing in Urdu in India would also be the same. In Urdu, women as you may be knowing, have been writing for the past hundred years. You know that the first woman novelist wrote in the same period as the first man-novelist. The point is—a woman writing self-consciously—that again is a situation common to women all over the world.

SK: But don't you think that there's bound to be a difference, since it'd certainly matter to what cultural context the writer is related to. George Eliot or the Bronté sisters had to pose as *men*-writers if only to conceal their female identity to escape the critical bias against a woman's writings in nineteenth century England. Till about fifteen-twenty years ago, the situation in India was perhaps the same. Wouldn't the evaluation of your work depend till a few years ago on the fact that you are a woman writer, and, would that result into any self-consciousness that you may have experienced or you may have to get rid of while you are writing. . .may be in selecting the theme of your creative venture or the taking of a particular stance.

QH: In Urdu, it may come as a surprise to many, there has never been a kind of segregation of man and woman in literature, as you may expect in a society based on the principle of segregation. I think we must understand this peculiar phenomenon at the outset. There have been women writing *fiction* and there have been women writing *poetry*. There was a slight male chauvinistic patronization at times—which one may encounter anywhere in the world. It was, I think never that emphatic and the woman did not get affected enough to be disturbed as a writer. She didn't have to worry at all. For instance, my own mother started writing at the age of thirteen or fourteen and there was no question of any criticism, as there would be in the case of a woman coming out of *purdah*—a woman would be writing even romantic short-stories or novels.

As for me, what I am perturbed about is not this self-consciousness, but the fact that critics in Urdu are generally not attentive to what is happening in fiction. There is a clear-cut neglect of fiction by the critic. No serious critical focussing has ever been done on fiction in Urdu. My own writing suffers from that.

SK: As a writer, then, you are fully conscious that your works are not getting an adequate and proper appreciation. And if there is appreciation, it may not be for the right reasons due to the non-serious approach of the critic.

QH: Yes indeed, there's just a general "hoo-hoo" and "ha, ha".

SK: Does that carry you into an exclusiveness of sorts. . .?

QH: No, I don't feel that at all. I am not an isolationist nor am I a celebrator of loneliness. That is not my problem at all. My only concern is that my work suffers from the lack of any active and lively literary give and take—you know, a literary life, as it were. There is a general indifference. I don't mean that I *need* critics. . .

SK: to survive as a writer. . .

QH: Yes, nor do I need the critics' certificates. Only, I feel bad about the neglect that fiction suffers from.

SK: In that, do you think that the creativity of the fiction-writer gets affected. . .

QH: Yes, indeed. The wrong kind of approach and the group mentality and group politics which promote bad and mediocre literature can do a lot of harm. I have mentioned, a number of times, really outstanding writers in fiction in my writings and interviews. many people have not even heard of them but there's never a follow-up. No-one asked me who they were, what they wrote etc. In Urdu, there is a strong tendency to attach one's self to a single writer. For example, a critic would start, what he calls specialising on one writer, say, "Premchand"—he'd go on writing about him, his characters, the bulls in his fiction, his village. Everything else in literature is of secondary importance. His total devotion to Premchand blinds him to everything else. Another one may be devoted to Iqbal, and yet another to perhaps "modern poetry". I think this is an easy way out.

SK: Do you think we could perhaps explain this tendency by trying to understand the complexity

Educated in India and abroad, Qurratulain Hyder was associated in important capacities with the Daily Telegraph, *London;* The Imprint and the The Illustrated Weekly of India, *among others. Also, she served as broadcaster for the Urdu Services, B.B.C. and as Adviser to Chairman, Central Board of Film Censors. Besides being Visiting Professor at Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, she has given extension lectures at the Universities of Chicago, Texas, California and Arizona. She was given the Sahitya Akademi Award for her collection of short stories* Patjhar ki Awaz *and her novel* Aag ka Dariya *has been published in all the fourteen national languages by the National Book Trust.*

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of the Indian society wherein each great writer constitutes a category in himself. There is a diversity, or rather the diversification of concerns and the multiplicity of perspective available to this society through its rich heritage and tradition, the exposure to a variety of cultures and religions down the ages on the one hand, and on the other, the reception of the high technology and "progress" oriented modern civilization. In the west, there are movements and categories to classify the writers (Primitivism, Naturalism etc. and literature of cruelty, of silence and so on); while here, it becomes far more difficult to "group" writers.

QH: But what I'd like to emphasize strongly is the *lack* of original thinking in critical writing here. It's so repetitive. I can close my eyes and repeat to you from the word "go" that the Progressive Movement began in 1936 and till today they are busy writing reports rather than criticism, producing more or less surveys. This goes on year after year. There is no criticism worth its name and their thinking is so confused. For instance, what a group of writers, made such a "ho-ha" about ten years ago when the so-called abstract writing and symbolistic writing was being done, today the same people are condemning it. There was supposedly a revolution in Urdu fiction and all earlier writing was rejected as backward and stupid. A lot of bad stories were recognized as *real* intellectual thinking, real inner life etc. All those cliches were used for stories which were not even riddles, for, riddles can be much more interesting. The same critics who had promoted that kind of writing are now condemning it. The point is that there is no clear thinking and perhaps there is no clearly developed critical faculty.

SK: Shall we take up another point of discussion? It's a known fact that your father, Sajjad H. Yaldrum was himself an established short-story writer writing in the conventional style before the emergence of the modernistic techniques or perspectives. A generation later, you have been producing a very different kind of fiction, both long and short. Would you accept that there's "progress" in literature and that you've taken the short story ahead? Or, is it just the question of how the writer confronts his own reality and gives his own kind of fictional representation to his experience?

QH: I think there's definitely "progress" in literature which is after all influenced by the progress or the advancement of the human mind. For instance, the philosophical probe into the concept of reality or say the discovery of the theory of relativity; writers who were writing prior to this would have a different world view. The general advancement of knowledge is bound to affect the sensibility of the writer. My father's generation was reading Tennyson and my generation was brought up, as it were, on T.S. Eliot and that itself makes all the difference. Of course great literature would always be great irrespective of the age it is produced in. As Hazlitt says, the writer captures the "spirit of his age"; it does not matter what technique he might use.

SK: There are more and more tools available to comprehend the various dimensions of reality now, and, the writer with his ingenuity finds newer modes of creative expression. I am reminded here of the frustration of some of the western writers such as Samuel Beckett, with the inadequacy of language vis-a-vis the expression of the creative experience. And this, mind you, is with the English language where there has been a tremendous emphasis on development in as far as the science of the language is concerned. Urdu has not had more or less developed hand in hand with the human psyche. Despite that or perhaps because of that, the "cacophony" produced by the "explosion of words" and the "language revolution", some writers are striving towards the "Literature of silence". There is a lack of faith in the semantic potential of the "word". I wonder if you take a similar position as a writer in Urdu?

QH: No, that is not my problem at all. Urdu is so rich. There is a tremendous range of meanings around each word in Urdu. I shall in fact not be able to cope with one single area of expression—a single dialect.

What concerns me, or rather disturbs me, is the gradual deterioration in the use of the language. I'm very bothered about the purity of language wherein lies its beauty. I feel upset when I hear unwieldy Hindi being used on the Doordarshan because Hindi is also a beautiful language. And they use ungainly expressions like *Mausam chipachipata rahega*. Well that's against the aesthetics of the language.

But as a writer in Urdu, I don't feel the inadequacy of the language at all because I am aware that the Urdu language has a lot to offer.

SK: Well, the linguistic theoretician should take the cue from this and help evolve the science of the language if only to make it retain its purity. It is, however, heartening to see your faith and confidence in Urdu and its potential power of expression.

Having gone through some of your works, specifically the well-known novel *Aag ki Dariya*, it is striking to see your perceptive concern for history. You make 'large expanses of time', huge chunks as it were, of history available in the 'present' in the novel. Tell me, when you are writing a short story do you feel constricted in any way because the form of the short story does not allow one to spread out over that kind of length of time?

QH: Yes, but I think many of my stories dwell over a long period of time. Some are about the whole life of a character, some about the life of a family. They tend to cover a number of phases of a life-time, not just one little piece, or facet.

SK: I find that your novels carry very poignant points of "stasis" and it gives me a feeling that you are far more comfortable writing a novel. I wonder if I could ask you as to what prompts you to choose the form of the short story then? Is there any theoretical position that you may take as regards the form you choose to write in. . .

QH: I think this whole business of theory. . . for me it doesn't mean anything. You write because you feel like writing. . . there's an idea you want to express.

SK: But sometimes the writer does make a conscious effort to understand intellectually the form he's choosing. . .

QH: May be they do, but for me, I have been basically interested in history and I have been using it in my fiction. . .

SK: How do you respond to this idea of annihilation of history, a modernistic approach to dissociate the "present" totally from the sense of history and to avoid any signification of the images presented by the author. Alain Robbe-Grillet's works are an example of such a presentation, where the writer tries not to interfere at all between the image and the reader, setting, as it were, an "illusion of immediacy". The harmony of the structure comes through the continuum of images. . .

QH: All these techniques and theories etc. . . . they don't mean anything to me. What I feel interested in, I spontaneously write. . . .

SK: Well, I think we are trying to egg ourselves on to determine what exactly you are interested in and how your specific point of view may be different from the others. Also, since the technique is bound with the theme, reflection on one aspect would yield clues to the better comprehension of the other.

QH: I have been trying to explain to many people over and over again that technique comes *naturally* while one sits down to write. One does not have to consciously think about it. *It just happens*: With a musician, it is different. He has a *raag*. Though he may take a different variation, the constraints of the *raag* have to be adhered to. For me it is different. For me, mostly some little scene, an image from my memory starts me off. And then the technique gets evolved by itself. For instance my recent novel *Gardish é Range Chaman*. I remember a scene. . . my mother was a pioneer of sorts in education and was very happy to meet educated women, particularly if a lady would go "abroad" to study. Well, there was a lady who came to Lucknow as an inspector of schools. My mother and I went to see her. Hers was a house hidden in a garden with thick huge trees. There were two ladies there, two middle-aged, unmarried sisters and the younger one, quite good looking was the Inspector who'd been to England. Now, at that time this was quite a novelty. I'm talking of the 30's. On the mantelpiece inside the house, there were some little ceramics. Strangely, we were told by the older woman that they were made by her when she'd joined an Arts School in England while she was chaperoning her younger sister in that country. Now that scene remained in my mind. I never met them again. . . Here were two

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ladies, simple folks from the middle class Muslim family, who were they and what happened to them, I don't know. But that scene stayed with me. And much later over the years, I started off with this novel with two ladies in a house in Lucknow. But they are mother and daughter. They've been to England; the younger one is a doctor and the mother says "I did those paintings when my daughter was studying". You see, this is how for a writer, anything like that is a starting point. I didn't sit down to work out the theme or the technique. I just started writing and the plot developed, the characters got going. I called it a semi-documentary novel because I brought in a lot of real people. . .

SK: This is interesting to see how a small image or a little happening got developed into a huge novel. Actually to come to think of it, even a casual reader notices the use of the visual in your stories. It's cinematic, this concern for the *image* and also, the play that takes place in the handling of time, going back and forth and the use of the montage. . .

QH: It's cinematic as well as the fact that I indulge in a little bit of painting too, so, the concern for colours, too.

SK: One notices that your use of the stream of consciousness technique mingles with the narrative style. I think writers in this sub-continent have adopted this practice rather than the use of the pure stream of consciousness as handled by Virginia Woolf. There's the linear sense of time and there's then the dive *into* time.

Shall we perhaps move on to another question? I'd like to draw your attention to your contemporaries in Urdu. How do you respond to them? In as far as critics and readers are concerned, there's hardly any give and take between the writer and them. But what about your fellow-writers? Do you feel particularly curious about some and do you specifically get attracted or influenced or even disturbed by some? And do you discriminate between the writer from the West and the one writing in Urdu? There are some writers who seem to be working isolatedly, deliberately not reading their own contemporaries.

Qurratulain Hyder: Oh, that'd be very sad. Not only do I read my contemporaries with interest, in fact I have been translating some of them into English. It'd be carrying one's smugness a bit too far, not to deliberately read one's contemporaries.

SK: There's at times a total dependence or a parasitic following of the other. Or at times there's a complete indifference or apathy; I'd say both are equally disturbing.

QH: It'd be silly to be like that. You are in fact enriched by looking around. There are four or five very significant writers in Urdu who've been actively writing as my contemporaries and I always read them.

SK: Could I have a statement by you on how you would define modernism?

QH: It's very difficult because what you call modernism today-well, Shakespeare also may have called himself modern as compared to, say, Chaucer. Modernism is very relative. In the nineteenth century, say from Baudelaire onwards, they were moderns—people writing in the earlier period, in the period of regency. . .well, Pope was modern in his times.

SK: Let me be a little more specific. In the early twentieth century, there was a kind of a cultural crisis in the West. The overall climate of doubt, a breakdown of faith in the context of industrialization, a scientific probe into reality and a questioning of some fundamental, established ideas in religion which led to a collapse of the "old" and the "conventional". That was just not adequate or appropriate any longer. The fragmented human psyche groped for the "newer" forms of creative expression to match the new thematic concerns. All this has been broadly termed as "modernism".

QH: The conventional forms were shaken and broken even earlier in France in the late nineteenth century. It came to us much later. But I'd not relate our situation with that because then we'd appear such Rip Van Winkles or merely imitative. In Urdu, T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* was translated in about 1935 while it was written much earlier. Baudelaire was introduced in Urdu about a hundred years later than his times as a "modern" poet of France. The point is, when we use the term "modern" we automatically relate it to something as having come to us from the West.

SK: But, don't you think, that "modernism" in the West the writer's consciousness even in the East, particularly in India where the British had entrenched English as a common language for communication.

QH: But you know that even in our painting, Amrita Shergil who became our first modern, was doing what had been done much earlier in Europe. So when we talk of "Modernism" in India, . . .

SK: . . .In the fifties. . .

Qurratulain Hyder: Oh, fifties?! Well, don't ask me! What is it . . . introspection, representation of inner life. . .

Sukrita: The same kind of concerns which one finds in English literature in the early twentieth century.

QH: Quite right—but then it's delayed action that one notices here. I am certainly not part of it. In fact, I started all this—monologue, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, abstract thinking, in the forties when I was a teenager. So, I am a pioneer which is of course not acknowledged. My short stories in *Sitaron Ke Aage* would bear me out. They demonstrate all those ideas which writers of the second generation in Urdu are trying to do. I did all that in my second year of graduation. All this is old hat for me. I've been through it long ago. And I did it unconsciously, not as a part of a fashion.

SK: As a writer who's reviewing what you did so many decades earlier, even if some of those modernistic characteristics were developed thirty or forty decade later in our context, what I'd like to determine is whether you think, something was added to what had already happened. Or is our modernistic literature a mere borrowing? Did you yourself feel that you were writing under the influence of such and such writer? Did say, the inner compulsion of the Urdu writer in the forties and fifties determine his literary techniques? However, the "new writer" hadn't yet come to be his own. The historically important happening, the Independence of the country, hardly seems to have inculcated a spirit of confidence and freedom. In fact it is the gruesome phenomenon of the Partition of the country that captured the sensibility of the writer. The "modern" short-story, I'd say acquired its maturity in Hindu and Urdu in sixties and seventies. Partly, the reason for this would perhaps lie in the fact that the *form* of the story is itself not indigenous.

QH: I don't know what you mean by the "mature short-story". In fact, Manto and Ahmed Ali have been producing great short-stories in the thirties.

SK: I think very few writers seem to have located an essentially native voice in as far as the representation of the "modern" (with its already specified connotation) spirit is concerned. In the fifties, for instance, there's clearly artificial insemination of ideas from abroad. The "existential", the "absurd" were being talked about amongst the intellectual elite and short-stories were being woven over the Western philosophic base. The short-story, therefore, appeared to be a sky-scraper precariously balanced without a foundation. A lot of experimental writing was being done. It's only in late sixties that the 'Modern' emerged as an evolved sensibility. Writers such as Ram Lal, Bedi, Joginder Paul, Surendra Prakash and some others wrote in their identifiable voices.

QH: How do you say that Ram Lal found his identifiable voice?

SK: Well, his form, no doubt, is partly conventional in the fact that he uses the narrative technique but what is particularly noticeable is the creating of an "atmosphere", the universe of the short-story through that plain style with a kind of certitude and confidence.

QH: . . Ram Lal is a good writer in the narrative form. He makes just a comfortable reading and is, what you may call, a "natural" writer. Joginder Paul has been doing a lot of experimental writing, however.

SK: The kind of hallucinated realism that one witnesses in the Latin American writer Garcia Marquez, don't you think, is much closer to the way we perceive reality here than say, the modernistic perspectives yielded by the modernistic writing from the West?

QH: Shall I confess to you, I have not been able to get around to reading Marquez and the other South American writers one hears so much about these days. . .

SK: Well, that's all right. It's just that I was struck

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by a kind of orientalism that it seems to project.

QH: It's a rage these days. The business of writing consciously, you'll be surprised to hear this. . . I was in Sweden recently for a Seminar. A Professor read a bit from the Penguin reproduction of my novel *Aag Ka Darya* (I'm quite sick of this novel and try not to mention it). Well, what he said, set me thinking about my total lack of interest in what I do. He read one chapter and said that I wrote a "total novel" much earlier than this American writer. And I didn't know what this "total" novel is, and I of course didn't even know about Marquez. Well, that apart, I feel shocked with the fact that our critics are not examining fiction in the way a new piece of writing is taken up elsewhere in the world: Our fiction suffers from a total neglect and the whole critical effort is concentrated on Poetry.

SK: Also, critical perspectives are generally drawn from the West—"structuralism", "deconstruction", I.A. Richards and so on. Surely, our literature could dictate its own critical canons and norms.

QH: Our critics seem to have nothing original to say. They go on *quoting* . . . this has been happening for the last forty years now. A long string of words and very little genuine analysis, jumbled and obscure thinking!

SK: Actually there is a discernible, logical development of the modern short story, a clear sense of the indigenous tradition that can be critically evolved. Our native myths and archetypes have gradually got assimilated in this literary form and our traditional modes of writing, *Katha*, *Dastaan* etc., have eventually got amalgamated with the New Short-story. I wonder why, very few critics, seem inclined to sort this out and establish the reality of the modern Indian short story. In the West, what happened rather abruptly in the early 20th century English literature, slowly took its roots and blossomed in the Indian soil with different hues and shapes.

QH: I should think that the fundamental problem with our critics is that they don't read at all. What do they read—some new critical books borrowed from the British Council or the U.S.I.S., from where they read up some new sensational stuff and then they start quoting left and right. Once they get important posts and chairs in the universities, then all they've to do is repeat themselves.

SK: Would you say that the power to dictate critical standards is rather misplaced?

QH: The big names that begin to control the readership of literature have done a lot of harm to the cause of good literature.

SK: Well, we've had a very free and open discussion on some fundamental problems regarding the creation and assessment of modern fiction. Thanks indeed for your uninhibited expression. ❑

An Insidious Phenomenon

P.C. Chatterji

THE VCR AGE: HOME VIDEO AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Edited by Mark R. Levy

Sage Publications, 1989, pp. 274, $16.95

This is the first study of how a new device in electronics is entering the home and affecting individuals and society. Five years ago when the editor of this book sent an article on home video to a communications journal it was returned with the comment that it was not evident that VCRs were more important socially than pop up toasters! The fact is that the penetration of VCRs into homes in the past five years has been faster than the growth of TV viewing in a large number of countries, not only in the western world.

The present volume is divided into four parts. The first section deals generally with the diffusion of VCRs with particular reference to the USA and Britain. The second enquires into whether owners are making the fullest use of this new gagdet; many do not seem to know the capabilities of their new found toy. The third part examines the psychological needs which the VCR fulfils; is it information, entertainment or what else? The fourth and final part deals with the cross-cultural influence of video.

Is video an extension of the existing technology of mass communication such as TV and film or is it an entirely new device which heralds a new form of communications. The authors contend that video is an extension of TV and film viewing. The important difference is personal choice. The individual can record programmes from the mass channels and view them later to suit one's own convenience. This is the foremost use of the VCR. Secondly, one can build up a library of cassettes of one's own, as one has a library of books. Thirdly, one can make a video of family events, such as marriages, birthday celebrations and the like. It is clear that the first two uses of video basically make use of what is available on TV and on films to suit personal tastes. The third is an extension of existing technology for the benefit of the family.

If VCR penetration has been high in the USA and western Europe the third world has not lagged far behind. The authors contend that more than half of TV households in the south-east Asian countries own VCRs and considerably a far greater number do so in the gulf states. The reasons for VCR penetration in the third world seem to be as follows. For example, if the number of TV channels is limited, the people go for video. If the film industry is undeveloped, as in Pakistan, that is another incentive to invest in a VCR. On a visit to Karachi a few years we found that Indian films which had not yet been released in the home country had been seen by our friends. In the third world generally, copyright is not respected and this has led to a great deal of piracy and financial loss to the film industry.

One interesting fact which VCR use has brought out is the avoidance of commercials. Advertisers assume that when a programme is viewed the intervening commercial ad is also seen. In practice, however, the audience do not pay attention to the ad, people leave the room or just don't attend. The VCR has proved this. Studies show that in playback on VCR, the commercials are avoided by what is called zipping. This phenomenon, which started as a trickle a few years back has swelled and as of now, one third of viewers avoid commercials.

The largest number of programmes for video are produced in the USA and are distributed internationally. Is this phenomena leading to cultural imperialism? The answer is not simple. Audiences do not swallow the message intended by the producers, which may include propagating a particular set of values. People both accept and reject messages from their own point of view. Nevertheless it is interesting that in the years before glassnost, the Soviet authorities expressed the opinion that VCRs were a danger to the security of the state. Customs officials were to ensure that VCRs were not smuggled into the Soviet Union.

VCR penetration in our country has been growing rapidly. This can be gauged from the fact that video distribution shops have proliferated. In the large cities such shops are to be found in every locality, big or small. In small towns and wayside villages video parlours have come into existence where it is stated that pornographic programmes are shown. Unfortunately accurate data is not being collected on the VCR phenomenon and its impact on Indian society at different levels. ❑

P.C. Chatterji is a former Director General of All India Radio and Doordarshan.

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From the Jalasagar to the Concert Platform

Indira Menon

BHATKHANDE'S CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC

By Shobhana Nayar

Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1989, pp. 362,Rs. 200.00.

Amir Khusrau, the scholar-musician of the 13th century wrote that Indian music was "so difficult and so refined that no foreigner could totally master it even after 20 years of practice." With its roots in the Vedic period, our music has evolved over the centuries to a level of sophistication, abstraction and theoretical complexity that makes Khusrau's remark an understatement. It has remained a living art form, despite some ups and downs, due to the practitioners of the art who have sustained and nurtured it, and the great intellects whose unending quest for a scientific musical system has given it a unique place in the world of music. "Endaromahanubhavulu, antariki vandanamu" sang the saint-composer Tyagaraja. "There are many great souls—my salutations to them all"—no doubt referring to those who had enriched "sangitajnanamu" (the knowledge of music).

One of the brightest stars of this galaxy was Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860–1936) whose contribution to Hindustani music forms the subject matter of the book by Shobhana Nayar. A Rennaissance man *par excellence*, Bhatkhande appeared at a time when much was happening at the soico-political level and the country was poised for a cultural rebirth. For over a century the music of the North had gone underground, taking refuge in the small courts and mansions of the petty Rajahs, Nawabs and jagirdars, following the decline of the Mughal court where it had been cultivated to a degree of excellence. The musician had come down in the social heirarchy though he did not suffer much economic hardship as he was well looked after by his patron. The science of music had all but disappeared, the ancient Sanskrit treatises lay buried and forgotten as no one seemed to have any use for them.

Geographical isolation and difficulties of communication between regions led to the emergence of the "gharana system" in which each region produced its special style of music pioneered by a rarely gifted musician, which soon became a jealously guarded family secret to be passed down from father to son following a strictly oral tradition. The rivalry between the gharanas prevented any interaction between the musicians or sharing of their rich repertoire. Music thus became the close preserve of a few, to the exclusion of the general public. Only those who had access to the courts could enjoy the rare privilege of hearing the great ustads. Only their sons or close relatives were given a full-fledged musical education. Other disciples were given only a fragmentary education for which they had to slave all their lives.

What the gharana system did, however, produce was a rich variety of styles which we can still hear today. It was also based on the *guru-shishya parampara* which we feel so nostalgic about as only that close rapport between the teacher and the disciple can bring out the full flowering of talent. One gets the impression of the author coming down rather heavily on the gharanedar musicians. Except for a brief acknowledgement of their contribution to the development of different styles, there does not appear to be an objective assessment of these custodians of our ancient heritage.

Today, when every respectable musician attempts to trace his lineage to some gharana or other, one wonders whether, in an uncertain political milieu, the gharanas were not really cultural oases which spawned some of the finest musical talent in the country. That Bhatkhande acknowledged their greatness is evident from the fact that he sent his best disciple, Pandit Ratanjankar, to Ustad Faiyyaz Khan for advanced training. Also, when he set out on his odyssey into the world of music, it was to these musicians he turned for practical demonstration. With the advent of the radio and the electronic revolution the system has got diluted and is on its way out and we shall be the poorer for it.

The gharanas had kept the art alive but the theory of music that had evolved over the centuries, shaped and moulded by intellectual giants like Bharata, Matanga, Sharangadeva, Ahobala and Shrinivas, had ossified. Music had become largely intuitive, imparted without knowledge of the basic foundation and unquestioningly accepted. What Bhatkhande was faced with, in other words, were a thoroughgoing musical system as expounded by the ancients and a highly evolved living art which had developed its own momentum and moved away from traditional theory. He therefore decided to weld them into a new system by applying traditional concepts with some modifications to the music that was currently in vogue. This basic dilemma that he faced and the manner in which he set about resolving it forms the core of the book and has been very competently handled by the author.

The colossal task that Bhatkhande set before himself could not have been undertaken by a

> It was Bhatkhande, who, for the first time, made it known to the public in the North that there were two distinct systems—the Karnatak and the Hindustani and that the nomenclature of the *shudha* and *vikrit swaras* of these systems were different from one another. Even in South India itself these facts were little known and it was after Bhatkhande's publications that the attention of people in the South was drawn to them.
>
> His exploration of the ancient theory from the *granthas* helped to solve diverse, mysterious and baffling theories of music as expounded by the old scholars. But for his efforts the music of the past centuries would have passed into oblivion. His formulation of the present day theory bore the stamp of his genius—an imaginative mind, balanced with rationalism and sanity—which made the study of music easy for the future generations.
>
> —From *Bhatkhande's Contribution to Music*

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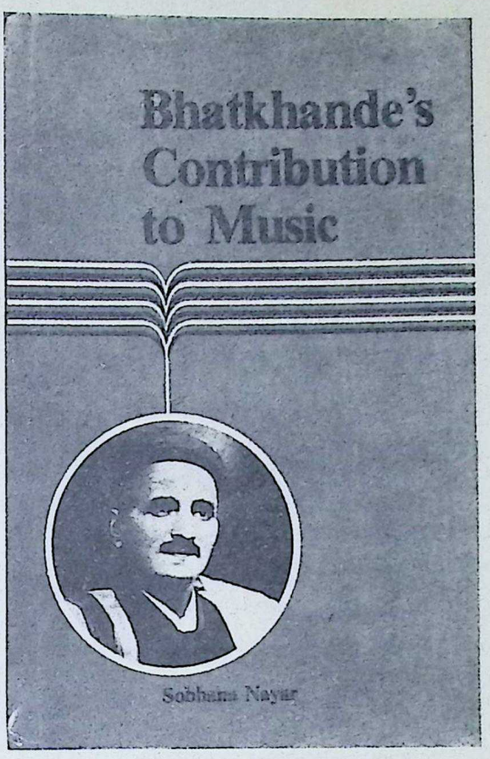
lesser mortal. In a chapter devoted to a discussion of the mental make-up of this amazing individual, Shobhana Nayar reveals the determination, perseverance and charm that went into the making of his personality. He was fighting against heavy odds in the form of inertia and vested interests and needed all these qualities and more to create order out of chaos.

The sixth chapter deals with the evolution of our musical system as emerged from Bhatkhande's researches into the ancient Sanskrit treatises. As the author unfolds the saga of the building up of our musical scale, note after note, one gets carried away by the sheer romance of it. The shruti-swara relationship and the methodologies followed by the various musicologists to define it are brought out in a lucid manner and should be of great benefit to a student of music. Having delved deep into these treatises, Bhatkhande decided to eschew what was no longer relevant for his purpose of codifying contemporary music, while at the same time drawing heavily from them wherever he felt the need. When musicians of repute demonstrated a deviation from traditional theory, he modified the theory to fit the living art.

The next step was to classify the ragas and their parent scales. The redoubtable Venkatamakhi of the 17th century had worked out all the permutations and combinations of the twelve accepted swaras and formulated a 72-scale *melakarta* system which has been the foundation of Karnatak music. Of these only a little more than one-fourth have so far acquired the status of ragas. (There have been attempts at composing in these 72 melas which is really an exercise in futility as melas bear the same relation to ragas as a scaffolding to a building and not even the voice of "MS" can breathe life into them) Bhatkhande, who was familiar with the Venkatamakhi system, observed that at that point of time ten major scales covered practically all the ragas, *janaka* as well as *janya*, that were currently in vogue in Hindustani music. These ten *thaats* and the ragas derived from the received detailed treatment in his books. The author shows how after patient investigation, the scattered fragments of Hindustani music and theory crystallised to form a rational corpus of music, accessible to all. This was achieved with the willing (sometimes reluctant) participation of the leading musicians and musicologists of the North and South whom he managed to get together at the conference table and arrive at a consensus on controversial matters. Being a good singer as well as composer, Bhatkhande was acquainted with the practical side of music and could not be accused of being an ivory-tower musicologist, though he did have to face criticism from several quarters.

The most severe criticism was levelled at his attempts at devising a notation system for Hindustani music. Notation was anathema to our musicians and with some justification, for notation is as little suited to Indian music as are keyboard intruments. Indian music is highly individualistic with the emphasis on *manodharma* or improvisation and it is not possible to adopt a fool-proof notation system for it as in Western music. It is the subtle nuances and embellishments that bring out the sublime beauty of our music, which, Bhatkhande himself admitted, cannot be expressed through notation. The *gandhar* of Durbari Kanhara, for eg, lies outside the purview of accurate classification and when sung by an artiste like Gangubai Hangal, becomes a spiritual experience defying analysis. Similarly, the *nishad* of the Karnatak Kalyani, though not a maverick note, when sung by T. Brinda of the Dhanam family, acquires an indefinable quality. Notation cannot create a great musician any more than the script of a play can produce a great actor; but they are both necessary to give him a clear idea of the basic structure of the raga/play and make him word perfect. Bhatkhande's aim was precisely this, as in the absence of any kind of written music, the student often did not understand what he was singing. Notation was also meant to serve the purpose of preserving the vast repertoire of compositions he had so assiduously collected from the various gharanas, employing every kind of strategem. But his efforts brought more brickbats than roses. Says the author: "When he imparted the lessons in notation, writing it on the blackboard, it created a commotion in the music world."



❖

The extraordinary genius of Bhatkhande, combined with rare qualities like profound scholarship and discursive brilliance, incisive and extensive vision, tactful and persuasive handling of persons including musicians, was totally harnessed in the service of music. This was a dedicated soul wedded to music.

From S. Mutatkar's Foreword to
Bhatkhande's Contribution to Music

❖

Bhatkhande's achievements were indeed mind-boggling. With a computer-like brain, he managed to collect, collate, classify and codify our music and make it available to the public through his prolific writings. By shifting our treasured heritage from the *jalsaghar* to the concert platform, he did a great service to society. For this he needed to be not merely a visionary, but also a practical man of action, an entrepreneur. Chapter 9 of Shobhana Nayar's book gives an interesting account of his pioneering attempts at holding music conferences where great minds could meet and interact.

This brings me to the first question that comes to mind after reading the book. There was another luminary at that time, fired by the same kind of zeal, and who undertook work that was, surprisingly, complementary to that of Bhatkhande. This was Pandit Vishnu Digamber Paluskar, the founder of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. Did the two Vishnus (as they are affectionately referred to) ever think of joining forces and working in tandem? While a whole page has been devoted to the "other" Vishnu as a contemporary, there is nothing to indicate the relationship between these two crusaders in whose lives one can find so many parallels.

The other disturbing question is whether Bhatkhande's great dream of democratizing classical music has really been fulfilled. Can we afford to sit back with complacency and say that Bhatkhande restored Indian classical music "to its present position of pristine glory" and leave it at that? Would not a postscript about the present scenario be in order? When one hears of a stampede at a Rock Festival, and sees a college hall emptying out at the stroke of the recess bell leaving the SPIC-MACAY artiste angry and humiliated; when one sees the whole nation drugged by a shrill, lisping falsetto from the film world; and when one thinks of the modern patrons of classical music like the Sangeet Natak Academy . . . one wonders whether all is well with Indian classical music and whether we have preserved the rich legacy left by "Chaturpandit" Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. ❑

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A Disjointed Pastiche

Indu K. Mallah

THE TEMPLE OF MY FAMILIAR

By Alice Walker

Penguin Books in association with the Women's Press, 1989, $4.99

When a writer has produced a book of the calibre of *The Colour Purple*, her next book is in danger of being an anti-climax, and this is exactly the case with *The Temple of My Familiar*. A book which the author calls a romance of the last 500,000 years is certainly an ambitious undertaking. Walker plays havoc with the novel-form in this book—in fact, one wonders whether it can be classified as a novel at all—there is no clear-cut plot, no story-line, no central character. But contemporary writers are constantly breaking away from the novel-form, and Black American women writers are no exception. Walker's own earlier novel *The Colour Purple*, is written is an epistolary form.

The central themes of this book are colonialism, oppression, religious imperialism, and exploitation, traced across time and space through the characters—Arveyda, a musician in search of his past, Carlotta, his Latin American wife, who lives in exile from hers, Suwelo, a Black professor of American History, Fanny, his ex-wife and granddaughter of Miss Celie of *The Colour Purple*, Lissie, a 'vibrant creature with a thousand pasts.' The author weaves myth and metaphor, legend and history, time and space, with inter-personal relationships, to create a complex web, at once tensile and shimmering, which quivers in every part, when one point is shaken. Impelled by the past, fate, lost scruple, illusion and disillusion, the characters perform the linked figures of their destiny.

Commenting on religious imperialism, one of the characters says: "My father had long since lost his faith; not in the spiritual teachings of Jesus, the prophet and human being, but in Christianity as a religion of conquest and domination inflicted on other peoples. . . .the white man, in his dual role of spiritual guide and religious prostitute, spoiled even the most literary form of God experience for us. By making the bible say whatever was necessary to keep his plantations going, and using it as a tool to degrade women and enslave Blacks."

There are many links and similarities to Eastern philosophy and thought: "We had begun to see, in Africa—where people worshipped many things, including the root-leaf plant, which they used to cover their houses—that 'God' was not a monolith, and not the property of Moses, as we'd been led to think, and not separate from us, or absent from whatever world one inhabited."

> *The author weaves myth and metaphor, legend and history, time and space, with inter-personal relationships, to create a complex web, at once tensile and shimmering, which quivers in every part, when one point is shaken.*

Colonial oppression is traced across the exploitative centuries to the Africa which had already been raped of much of its sustenance, and whose people had been sold into slavery. Millions of whose trees had been shipped to European countries to make benches and altars in those grand European cathedrals, and whose minerals and metals mined, and its land planted in crops for the benefit of the foreign invaders. . . . Many of whom viewed the Africans themselves as having no right to be in Africa, since it was the plan of the white people to take over the continent, the Africans represented merely, the 'Burdensome responsibility of genocide.'

Racism, as it exists currently in the U.S.A. is summed up succinctly by Fanny: "There is the maddening illusion of freedom without the substance. It's never solid, unequivocal, irrevocable. . . . Black people have the oddest feeling . . . of forever running in place."

Using the idiom of mythology, legend, and folk-lore, which is so much a part of the African tradition, Walker explores and explodes several myths, including that of Perseus and Medusa. According to her, Medusa is Isis, Goddess of Egypt, the Great Mother, The Keeper of the Earth, the Black Madonna, and Perseus symbolizes the white male world destroying the black female Goddess/Mother tradition and culture of Africa. She goes one step further, and suggests that Athena, the Greek Goddess, is really the metamorphosis of Isis. In a startling reversal of roles, Walker suggests that white people are really insecure, and are envious of Blacks, and that at one time, both Whites and Blacks lived together in Africa, but that the whites were forced to leave because their pale skins could not take the sun. "The white man worships gold because it is the sun he has lost." She goes even further and suggests that the white man is sick, and that allowances must be made for him.

There are frequent references to 'dream memory' so reminiscent of Jung's collective unconscious, particularly by Miss Lissie, who can recall all her previous incarnations, and by Ola, Fanny's father, who tells his daughter:

"Have faith that what is in your consciousness can be communicated to the consciousness of all. And is, in many cases, already there." This again, would seem to be an African tradition, and is closely linked to myths and legend, as evidenced by the work of many outstanding Black writers and poets—Chinua Achebe and Kofi Awoonor, to mention two. According to them, myths are what give African literature their stamp of uniqueness—they provide a process of the Black Africans as a people—which informs them of their Africanness. That they are, in fact, "the memory of a community."

One has the feeling of being given an all-embracing, holistic over-view, which spans both time and space. Miss Lissie reminisces about living in forests that seemed to cover the whole earth, playing under trees like cathedrals, and of consorting with her animal cousins, in one of her previous incarnations.

Walker provides some sensitive philosophical and psychological insights into the racial question, inter-personal relationships, and into the human, and universal condition. These are scattered throughout the book, and surface particularly in 'The Gospel According to Shug', one of the articles of which says: "Helped are those whose every act is a prayer for harmony in the Universe, for they are the restorers of balance to our planet. To them will be given the insight that every good act done anywhere in the cosmos welcomes the life of an animal or a child."

The author's 'womanism', to replace the extreme 'feminism' also comes into play. As does her pride of identity. In short *The Temple Of My Familiar* conforms to the general format of Black Literature, particularly, Black Women's literature. There is the Quest theme—the search for a meaningful identity, the attempt to sustain one's self-dignity in a world of growing alienation, absurdity, and moral decay, and the need to nurture one's self-esteem in a hostile social climate. The psychological reaction to centuries of racial persecution comes across strongly, and in places, touchingly. One of the characters reflects sadly that it was perhaps the tears and sweat of all the suffering people of the earth that made the ocean salty.

But in spite of all this, *The Temple of My Familiar* fails to convince not only as a novel, but as a coherent statement of any kind. Isolated pinnacles of brilliance, however authentic, do not make a composite, literary whole. The over-all effect of the book is that of a disjointed pastiche. ❑

Indu K. Mallah is a free-lance writer.

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Exploring the Human Psyche

Vinay Lal

WE HAVE ARRIVED IN AMRITSAR AND OTHER STORIES

By Bhisham Sahni

Translated by Jai Ratan

Disha Books, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 228, Rs. 60.00

Although Bhisham Sahni is known to many Indians as the author of the novel *Tamas*, subsequently televised as a serial, to Hindi readers his name has long been familiar as a writer of short stories. Eight collections of his short stories have been published over the last three decades, and here and there one encounters one of his stories in English translation. *We Have Arrived In Amritsar*, however, is the first full-length volume of his stories to appear in English translation, and it leaves little doubt that Bhisham Sahni is a modern master of the short story.

The work of the Sahni brothers, Bhisham and Balraj, has in the public imagination at least been linked to the theme of the partition, and the blurb at the back of *We have Arrived in Amritsar*, perhaps just as much as the title, gives the erroneous impression that this collection of stories is likewise set against the backdrop of the cataclysmic events of 1947. The partition serves as the theme of only two stories, and even here Bhisham Sahni is more interested in exploring the processes by which communalism takes hold of men's minds, and the psychology of human relationships at times of acute stress, than in 'what happened'. It is a motley crowd of working men, middle-class housewives, domestic servants, and some rather more unusual characters, that fills the pages of the remaining eleven stories. At one moment we find Sahni writing about a Chinese monk in India; then we encounter a thief and his victim, locked together in a bizarre relationship, in surroundings that can only be described as Kafkaesque; and elsewhere the nature of political opportunism, with its crass reliance on votes and promise of power, and its failure to even recognize—much less respect—the realm of the sacred, is vividly brought to the fore.

Whatever the broad canvas to which Bhisham Sahni applies his strokes, his stories express two central concerns, the first posed as a question, and the second perhaps as an article of belief. How far is man free to act as he will, endowed with the agency to shape his world, and how far is he a mere puppet on strings, a grain of sand blown hither and thither by the fury of the storm? The lives of Sahni's characters are marked by a continual tension between destiny and freedom, between the large forces which appear to leave us powerless and our own desire and will to achieve. Sahni, insofar as he is represented by the philosophically-inclined narrator, inclines to the view that the outcome of this struggle between freedom and restraint is a foregone conclusion: our decisions are made for us. "One's course in life is decided by one's poverty, one's limitations or inclinations", he writes in the story "The Only Way"; "One never chooses; one just gropes along blindly" (p. 209). This didactic voice would surely have agreed with Schopenhauer that though one can will, one cannot will to will. Yet the young woman in this story, abandoned by her brahmin husband, and subsequently left to fend for herself in the big city, is despite a lame left leg at last able to take the resolute step to stand, literally and metaphorically, on her own feet and thus defy those forces of destiny which seem irrevocably poised at the edge of victory. Likewise, the eponymous protagonist of "Radha-Anuradha", takes the bold step of eloping with her lover to prevent her father from marrying her to an old widower. In Sahni's stories, the didactic voice of the narrator, which would have us believe that the range of human action is circumscribed, is frequently at odds with the courageous behaviour and spirited actions of ordinary women and men.

Whatever the broad canvas to which Bhisham Sahni applies his strokes, his stories express two central concerns, the first posed as a question, and the second perhaps as an article of belief. How far is man free to act as he will, endowed with the agency to shape the world and how far is he a mere puppet on a string . . .

The tension between freedom and restraint in Sahni's stories is equalled only by the tension between speech and silence. What emerges is a belief in the incommensurability, not only of viewpoints, but of different worlds. Words communicate, and yet they don't: they simply hang in the air. Human communication is pregnant with possibilities, and yet it fears to be fulfilled. No one person can ever fully understand another: a perfect commensurability is not possible; but is it desirable? Chacha Mangal Sain, in the story by the same name, is taken away by his nephew, from the lane in Sabzi Mandi where he used "to live in a room like a hovel", and installed in the comfort of a suburban home. The nephew's wife is scarcely happy: the old man, recovering rapidly from his ailments, shows himself "in his true colours." He clears his throat noisily, spits all over the place, drinks his tea with a slurp, and takes to gossiping with the servants and neighbours. The wife contrives to keep the drawing room out of bounds for him; gradually he is prevented from leaving the house; and eventually he is confined to his room. Then, one day, he just vanishes. Many months later the nephew returns to Chacha Mangal Sain's neighbourhood, and finds him seated outside on a cot, exchanging remarks with the *mohalla* women, bantering with the boys. The lingering image, as the nephew leaves his chacha, is of three small boys dancing around the old man's cot, "while he lay there brandishing his lathi at them, and making threatening noises" (p. 208).

"Chacha Mangal Sain" is not only a story of how men are set in their ways, constrained by certain habits and modes of thought, or of how the generation gap is a tangible and visible barrier to communication. Nor can we reduce it to an expression of the conflict between a self-assured modernity and the contentment that adherence to tradition provides. The story is all this, and more: the old man lives in the only way that he knows, and that is his authenticity and the authenticity of the modern world, which may be just another name for efficiency and bureaucratic management, cannot substitute for the authenticity of an old man who knows he belongs in the streets and byways of life, not in suburbia with its sanitized satisfactions.

As the problem of authenticity is a species of the larger problem of incommensurability of different worlds, so is the question of religious intolerance. The Hindu boy Pali, in the opening story of the volume, gets separated from his parents as they leave a refugee camp for India, and is brought up as a Muslim by a childless couple. His biological parents, now across the border, make many attempts to recover him; seven years later they succeed. Once he was circumcised; now a tuft of hair is left in the middle of his cropped head. So is he a Hindu or a Muslim? While the men fight it over, somewhere one woman weeps. Sahni doesn't waste words on religious shibboleths, yet one can scarcely doubt that he would have agreed with Kabir:

> *The Muslim's* namaz *is as different from a Hindu's* puja
> *As a bracelet's gold is from gold in an ear-ring.*

If we knew that the gold in the bracelet differs not from the gold in the ear-ring, would these different worlds be reconcilable then? A more

Vinay Lal is a freelance writer.

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To be able to fully explain evil is to provide its rationale, its justification. Ultimately Sahni's stories leave us with the feeling that there is, and will continue to be, something inexplicable and ineffable about human behaviour. Life, in this sense, is something of a mystery, something of an accident—and indeed both these motifs figure largely in many of the stories.

arresting, not to mention chilling, perspective emerges in the story, "We have Arrived in Amritsar". A train is on its way to Amritsar; somewhere along the way, at a wayside station, a Hindu family tries to enter a compartment, but is prevented from doing so by a couple of Pathans. The train pulls out of the station; and no sooner has it left, then the platform becomes a raging inferno. An "oppressive silence" reigns over the compartment, but as it approaches Amritsar, the supposedly effeminate Hindu passenger, hitherto a silent spectator of the Pathans' callous behaviour, hurls the most abusive words at the manly Pathans. At Amritsar station the Pathans leave the compartment, but later, in the dark silence of the night, the Babu does to death with an iron rod a Muslim who tries to enter the compartment at a station. The job is done; the revenge is complete. The Babu smiles his "horrifying smile"; the train carries on.

We know that men are moved by a complex of motives, that passion is unctrollable, and that the fragile threads by which webs of communication, understanding, and existence are spun can snap at the slightest excess of stress. We think we understand why the Babu acts as he does, but in reality this understanding can never fully be ours, nor ought it to be so. To be able to fully explain evil is to provide its rationale, its justification. Ultimately Sahni's stories leave us with the feeling that there is, and will continue to be, something inexplicable and ineffable about human behaviour. Life, in this sense, is something of a mystery, something of an accident—and indeed both these motifs figure largely in many of the stories.

With the publication of Bhisham Sahni's stories, his work should become more widely known in the English-speaking world. It is only to be regretted that the expertise and long experience of Orient Longman has been put to such poor use in the production of this book. We are told by Jai Ratan that "some" of the translations are the author's own, but any further information in this respect is withheld from the reader. Moreover, such collections should provide, as this one does not, the original title and date of publication of each story. Numerous printing errors, sloppy proof-reading, and poor editing will do little to enhance the reputation of the publisher (see, for example, pp. 47, 68, 87, 95 and 157). Surely Bhisham Sahni deserves better? ❑

Poems from Kanara and Peru

H.Y. Sharada Prasad

SEELGAVANAGULU

By Shivarama Karanth

SSB Publishers, Bangalore, 1990, pp. 10 + 83, Rs. 22.00

At eighty-eight, Shivarama Karanth has lost none of his power to surprise. Not known to be a poet, he has come out with a book of poems. Earlier this summer he was on a tour of South America with his troop of Yakshagana players. Half way round the world, he had a good amount of time on his hands. His mind was full of new experiences—the awesome sight of the Amazon, outclassing in might the rivers known to history, like the Eupharates and the Tigris, the Nile, the Ganges and the Indus and the Yangtse, the sensation of seeing the Abhimanyu of our mythology trapped in the Inca terraces of the Andes, and the inevitable exercise that people indulge in when in other lands—of taking stock of what we had done with our dreams of freedom. The result was a number of poems, for poetry is a quicker way of saying things than prose. Karanth came back with ten or twelve of these poems. Then, remembering that over the last sixty years, he had written an occasional poem (as distinct from the songs he wrote for his operas) and he hunted them up. An enterprising publisher has published these fifty-seven poems in less than two months in a slender, attractive volume. One wishes the date was mentioned beneath each poem.

The title means poems that rend and cleave. Karanth has always been known for the fire in his eyes and on his tongue. He was one of the few in the Romantic Age of Modern Kannada to remain uninfected by Romantic values. In these poems he uses now a scalpel and now a hatchet to expose the humbug and cynicism in our national life:

"Vande Mataram" they sing,
They sob after murdering their mother.

And:

You need a hundred lives' merit to be born in India,
In this India of Chandraswami and Dhirendra,
and of people who can swallow entire guns.

Again,

They lord over you from Delhi
Those who have digested Ashoka and Akbar.

Nothing very original in thought, perhaps, but translation from our languages into English robs the lines of their tonal force and verbal associations.

The South American poems are fascinating, and not merely for the reason that no poems have been written in Kannada from there. Karanth's encyclopedic mind and sensivtiveness deal with a whole continent's agony. The poems do not set out to be satirical. There is a moving one on Inca gold and how the spaniards seized it from a trusting people.

◆

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Among the avowedly satirical poems are a couple which pour scorn on poets who do not employ words to receive and carry understanding but to weave gossamer webs of the supposedly beautiful. There are also parodies of nationalistic songs, recording Karanth's own early infatuations and quick disillusion with the Gandhian movement. But quite a few poems do not rend and cleave, for example the poem about his grandparents who watered the roots of the family tree and the poem of dedication to his mother whose cradle songs come leaping over hedge of his old age. ❑

H.Y. Sharada Prasad worked in the Indian Express, and was later Editor, yojana. He was Information Adviser to the Prime Minister for over eighteen years.

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The Author as Humanist

To me the person Sivasankari is more important than the writer Sivasankari"

The test I apply is to translate the story into a simple everyday Hindi, (I concede that it can be done only partially) and then see whether it could still move me or was it only the dialect weaving an exotica. On that basis I can say that while *Pattangpur Puran* remained just as fresh without the dialect as with it, *Kalai Mamiyar* (Kalai's Mother) and *Kaalam Maari Pochu* (The Times Have Changed) lost much of their charm in translation. Not that the stories are not universal in their appeal. They are. But the dialect is so much a part of the milieu that it is difficult to imagine the characters in any other cultures. They set out to fashion their own destinies, but are overwhelmed by circumstances and their own inadequacies. Their tragedy is that they are unable to overcome their sense of inferiority.

Nostalgia is for a past they do not want to recapture. Almost eighty years.

How long did it take to write this novel?

Once the area of darkness is accepted as a given, one stops looking there except to be awe struck by the luminescence of human endurance. Sivasankari never dreamt that she would one day become a writer. And more surprisingly in her younger days, she never was an avaricious reader. It was an ugly incident—one of the crude gossip which persist even to this day—which provoked her to become a writer. The injustice of it all made her restless, angry and inconsolable. She felt that she had to do something. During the small hours of the night, her pent-up emotions found an outlet—in a flood of words, which arranged themselves into a moving short story. She had it typed out, illiterate as she was, and sent it to a popular Tamil weekly and was shocked to hear from the editor almost immediately: "You handle human emotions beautifully. That's your strong point. Cultivate it." From then on, there was no looking back. Today she is the author of more than one hundred short stories and novelettes, sixty-nine novels, six travelogues and a biography. And as she puts it laughingly, "Because I never read much, I developed my own style. My liability became my plus point.

It is the authenticity of her stories which make them so immensely popular. A peerless observer of detail and event and alert to every unique inconspicuous incident which so distinguishes people, her books reflect life. And truth itself. And she avoids easy sentimentality and never turns self-righteous. One doesn't merely recognize bits of oneself in her characters. On reading *TYAGU: Oru Manithanin Kathai* so many people presumed that she had detailed their own lives!

How does she write? Anything can trigger off a story—a news flash, a headline, a stray incident which she witnessed. For Sivasankari the actual process of writing never takes more than a few hours. It is the gestation period, when the idea simmers in the head, slowly taking shape which takes a long time. Sometimes it takes years for research to be done. She weaves the entire story in her head, with the rich detailing and the exact characters and even their ages firmly etched in her mind. On reading *TYAGU: Oru Manithannin Kathai* Bala, editor of *Ananda Vikatan*, a Tamil weekly, was shocked. "The novel," he remarked, "was exactly as she had described when she broached the idea of writing the story of an alcoholic to me.

How did the story take shape in your mind?

Almost eight years.

How long did it take to write this novel?

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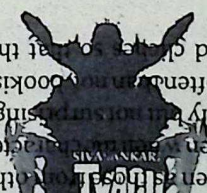

SIVASANKARI ON TYAGU

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Letter From Kerala

Paul Zachariah

It is not surprising that I write a letter from Kerala sitting in Delhi, when you consider that twenty-five per cent of all Malayalis live outside Kerala. Modern Malayalam fiction of the post-Independence genre was, for all practical purposes, created by expatriate writers. The nostalgia and alienation of exiles had given it a new edge. Literature was, perhaps, foretelling, as it should, the Malayali exodus into the wide world looking for bread. At least one Malayalam writer—T.V. Kochu Bava, a shortstory writer of remarkable innovative gifts—is caught in the cockpit of the Gulf war today. From Delhi runs one of the most active Malayalam publishing houses, though of a missionary nature: the Atheist Publishers, established by the expatriate writer, rationalist, journalist and social critic, Idamaruku. In Delhi, live three cult figures of the modern Malayalam novel: O.V. Vijayan, Anand and M. Mukundan. The truth is, over the years, unknown to Malayalis themselves, two different Keralas have emerged; one fixed on the map and the other a greater, flexible, mobile Kerala spilling over into every civilized—and uncivilized—corner of the world. It is not accidental, therefore, that when an international conflagration erupts as it has happened now, not thousands but lakhs of Malayalis are caught in it. This is the Malayali diaspora. Only unlike the Jews, it was a creation of the machinations of the Malayali himself in his own homeland; the direct result of a revolution that went sour, corrupt and parasitic. That is another story. What it all adds up to is that a Malayali today can write a letter from Timbuctoo and call it a letter from home. And the chances are that his letter might carry a more balanced view of the situation in Kerala than one from Kerala itself. Because, not only does distance lend perspective and the non-resident Malayali keeps a sharp eye on what happens at home, in the original Kerala there is nothing balanced any more, except the geometrical regularity of rubber plantations and the fanatically long rows of humans on the roads agitating against themselves.

Several districts in Kerala recently attained total literacy. One would expect thus that literature is flourishing there. What is flourishing is publishing. Literature is—no, not dying—in a state of frozen narcissism, "serious" literature, that is. Pulp is flying high, which explains why publishing is prospering. Kerala boasts today of India's highest circulated and highest read periodicals, both of them mere compendiums on cheap newsprint of instalmentalised novels ranging in topics from Tantric horror to soft porn. "Serious" literature never anticipated the literacy explosion. It did not foresee the hordes of alphabet-hungry neo-literates, especially women, wanting to plunge into the magic kingdom of the printed word. It had remained cocooned in the unnatural safety of the ivory towers of the fifties and the sixties without realizing that it was being steadily edged out by the massively urgent reading needs of a new, bland, indiscriminate generation which cared two hoots for intellectual finesses. Publishers, being entrepreneurs, saw what was coming and they were ready. And dozens of novel-producers were ready. And the people were of course ready. Is it forever true then that meaningful literature cannot reach out to the masses, that it must remain a pocket-borough in the greater kingdom of life? Perhaps it can never bridge the gulf of pulp. But it can at least detach itself from mesmerised postures of self-admiration and look around with eyes that see directly into life.

"Serious" publishing has suffered a great setback—though for other reasons—in the near-collapse of India's first writers' cooperative publishing house, the Sahitya Pravartaka Sahakarana Sangham (SPCS-C standing for cooperative). It has been driven to ground above all by that great curse of all cooperative enterprises, bureaucratisation through government nominees. Equally damaging has been factors like unionisation, managerial amateurism and incompetence, infiltration by a-literary vested interests promoted by politicians and that inherent fate of any Malayali institution: United We Fall. In the fifties when most of published Malayalam literature was still restricted to a couple of weeklies, it was SPCS which gave new Malayalam writers unlimited access to the printed book and the bookshop. Not a small matter. SPCS nourished the extraordinary growth of the library movement in Kerala and revolutionised both book-marketing and Keralite reading habits by launching highly successful Home Library Instalment Schemes. Works of the finest Malayalam writers, translations of the greatest works in world literature, path-finding dictionaries, new, authoritative editions of Malayalam classics, all found their way into thousands of village libraries and Malayali homes through this remarkable organisation. But those were the days when it still had not been infiltrated by fortune hunters. The news today is that it lies in shambles—and you certainly can't blame it on The Neglect of the Centre.

In the meanwhile, an indefatigable senior citizen—familiar to Malayalis by the initials of his name, DC—the man who once guided SPCS into its golden times and who, as it always happens to enterprising minds in Kerala, was bundled out precisely for being enterprising and successful had made a battling come-back. This grand old man of the Malayalam publishing and literary world—D.C. Kizhakemurry is a writer in his own rights, a freedom-fighter, a vegetarian, an agnostic and a very perceptive commentator on Malayali society—has salvaged meaningful book-publishing from the ruins it had been left in by the slow, ponderous and scandolous decay of the SPCS. One by one, the best of writers have gravitated to DC, though he pays a lower royalty (fifteen per cent as against SPCS's thirty per cent) and though he belongs to that category of business Kerala's revolutionary-minded intelligentsia had trained itself to look down upon: private enterprise. In an exploding literary market like Kerala, what D.C. Kizhakemurry did was to publish books as if it mattered—to himself, his readers and his writers. When, during the last World Book Fair, Indian publishing industry, as the small clique of Delhi publishers (mostly of 500-copy, unbelievably priced, often author-subsidised, miscellaneous 'library' editions) calls itself, unveiled photographs of its own office-bearers in its Hall of Fame, I thought of D.C. Kizhakemurry and his one-man stand for the revitalisation of a whole literature. But then people in Delhi, though they always call themselves "national" this and "Indian" that, have always been notoriously short-sighted, whether in politics or in publishing. That again is another story.

We have received a number of enquiries about the addresses of *Sarvanam* and *Natrang* which we give below:

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Svaman
Foundation for Dalit Literature
4 Hemang Park, Vejalpur
Ahmedabad 385001
Gujarat

Natrang
Editor: N.C. Jain
I-47 Jangpura Extension
New Delhi 110 014

Paul Zachariah is a writer in Malayalam.

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Sparkling Creativity

Ratna Lahiri

MAUNI

By U.R. Anantha Murthy

Translated from Kannada by B.R. Narayan

Bharatiya Jnanpeeth Prakashan, 1990, pp. 223, Rs. 70.00

The name of 'Samskara' Anantha Murthy is not unknown to the Hindi reader as that laudable translation was one of those rare ones that retained the racy quality of Murthy's narrative style. This collection is an anthology of his short stories.

The attempt of Bharatiya Jnanpeeth in bringing out Hindi translations of eminent literary writing in the regional languages, is indeed worthy of praise. It is important though that the task is not treated cavalierly, and the translations are edited as to readability in the receiving language. Quite often the whole point of the story may be lost to the Hindi reader if this simple precaution is not taken as has happened in some of these stories. Confusion worst confounded is the result when even this redeemable translation is carelessly proof read so as to create impressions not originally intended. In fact, it is the total lack of care in the proof reading stage that has unfortunately plagued this otherwise excellent production of Anantha Murthy's well known short stories in Hindi. Fortunately this reviewer had the English translations of these stories in hand. So it was possible to refer to the English version of the confusing passages for clarification. The average reader in Hindi may not be so fortunate, and then this great writer of Kannada is likely to come through as a very mediocre one through no fault of his! To quote a few examples, *Marnaa* becomes *Maarna*, and *Daadi* becomes *Didi* creating at other places, the verbless sentences acceptable to the Kannada reader but quite unfamiliar to the nature of Hindi irk the reader causing avoidable jarring.

However, bad proof reading and unpolished translation cannot camouflage the sparkling creativity of a writer of the calibre of U.R.Anantha Murthy. Like a diamond covered with dust, the connoissuer can easily see through the true worth of this brilliant writer who takes us through various situations that life often puts us through anyway. We see him sometimes mocking and sometimes sympathetic to the protagonist, who might be one of us, but always uncannily accurate in fathoming the deep unconscious layers that lie within. The reader is taken deep into his own self, torch in hand, step by step, now enlightening this dark corner, now that, always revealing layer by layer, some half acknowledged truth that he always was afraid to admit but always enlightening, always elevating. This magical quality in Anantha Murthy's writings no doubt makes him not only one of the best known Kannada authors, but also a writer to watch out for in the contemporary Indian literary scene. May his tribe increase!

Specially deserving mention in the Hindi version are *Sukha* (Drought) *Maa* (Mother), *Ghatashraddh, Kavi ki Poornima* (The Poet's Full Moon) and *Kabhi na samapt hone wali kahani* (The never-ending story). Profound and sensitive stories like *The Sky and the Cat*, *The Sun-horse*, and *The Clip-joint*, do not come through as effectively as their English versions do.

The translator in his introduction to the short story in Kannada traces a brief but incisive history of the genre in the region which is very useful for the student of comparative literature as well as to the reader in Hindi. Bharatiya Jnanpeeth has indeed served the cause of national integration in more ways than one, and one looks forward to their promise of bringing forth more translations in other genres. But they would do well to keep up uniformity in providing incisive introductions such as this one. A complete set of stories for example, from all the creative language areas, would then give a quick glimpse of the contemporary Indian scene in the genre concerned.

Unfortunately the stories are not in chronological order and do not quite reflect the current evolution of the author. A chronological approach would have further enhanced the compilation in that it would also trace the directions in which the author gravitated in different time periods of his creativity. Three stories are from the 1955 collection of Anantha Murthy, the others perhaps should have been dated too.

The first story *Sukha* is very relevant and perhaps comes through as one of the best in translation with the exception of *Ghatashraddh*. An idealist IAS officer who skips one meal a day when there is a famine around, is frustrated in his sincere efforts to bring relief to his district due to the vested interests of politicians who wish to thwart the 'credit' going to the present Chief Minister if the problem is solved. Humanity seems to be of no consideration for anybody, as communal riots flare up in the town. But the people as always come up. Aziz a Muslim rickshaw puller helps save the school-going child of the protagonist. But even as the district Magistrate hands over the kid to his distraught wife, he is reluctantly forced to sign the firing orders the S.P. had been hankering after. *Pravritti* deals with the perennial tussle between the values of the older generation in conflict with those of the younger, money being a reality no one can dismiss as easily any longer.

Sankappayya is a Vedic Brahmin who is reluctant to leave his orange groves even when perennial water shortage has made it uneconomic. The son is determined to join his maternal uncle's hotel in the town. Ultimately even the wife leaves him to join the son, unable to bear the grinding poverty.

Kartika and *Mor* depict the eternal conflicts of a sensitive and creative mind. The pull of the sublime conflict with daily drudgeries, the senseless love-hate patterns and selfish meaness in juxtaposition with ephemeral existence. The message of the seasons changing with unfailing regularity and the conscience-stricken protagonist who is not able to look after his old parents but cannot forget them either. To a large extent, these stories seems partly autobiographical, which can be said fairly often about more than one of the author's works. Anantha Murthy's own background of the *Agrahar* living amidst rituals of grandparents inspite of the continuous bickering with their daughter-in-law, his mother; the beautiful Abbakka who would answer questions when possessed, all come sharply into focus in this story, just like the author's description of his childhood and factors that shaped his creativity during the "Meet the Author" session sponsored by the Sahitya Akademi.

Clip Joint traces the same protagonist from this orthodox value system face to face with a whorehouse situation in the fleshpots of the world. A sensitive portrayal maybe, but perhaps not quite sublime as intended in this translation.

The same may be said of *Ma*—in Hindi translation it comes through as too mushy, too sentimental and the 'mother' sounds like the Hindi film variety. Instead of the intended subtlety, we find the same excessive sentimentality over-powering the finer sensibilities of the reader in some other excellent stories as well. Maybe it lies in the nature of Hindi, which is a factor the translator should have taken into account.

Ghatashradda has been filmed and is well known as one of the best pieces by the author. How often we see the situation repeated even today. The young widow is severely reprimanded by society when she is not able to accept the heavy morality imposed on her but the same society happily accepts the seventy year old father's remarriage to a nubile young girl who must now provide the 'pure' food that the 'polluted' daughter no longer may. In fact so 'polluted' is she that her last rites are performed by the father as she now no longer exists for him.

Mauni expresses old village jealousies and rivalries at its best but there is no explanation of why it has been chosen as the title of the book. A self-respecting person is crushed to submissiveness by vested interests and he dies fighting the system.

One will look forward to other such collections as per the promise of the Director, Bharatiya Jnanpeeth in the prologue. The promised series, to be worth collecting will have to come out in quick succession. So Bravo Jnanpeeth and keep them coming! ❑

Ratna Lahiri is a creative writer in Hindi and is currently associated with Garutman *Books.*

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

NUMISMATIC HISTORY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

By Parameshvari Lal Gupta

B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1988, Monochrome illustration 26, pp. 225, Price not stated.

Since Cunningham's time, quite a few scolars have written on the coins from Himachal Pradesh but only *en passant*. Mainly the Audumbara coins were known and illustrated by A.K. Coomaraswamy. The significance of coins as an important tool for reconstructing and piecing together the scattered threads of early history of this province has been recognized by scholars in the past ten years. The tedious task of putting together the historical facts in a coherent sequence has been accomplished admirably by Parmeshvari Lal Gupta, the eminent coin specialist of our country.

The author takes into account coins belonging to a fairly long period dating from the Nanda-Maurya period to that of the Delhi Sultans and the Mughals. The canvas is broad enough to cover all the erstwhile princely kingdoms of Chamba, Kangra, Kulu, Una, Hamirpur, Mandi and Simla hills. The coins used as source material for this study are mainly the ones preserved in the collections of Chamba and Shimla museums.

The author has tried to prove that the denomination of Jalandhar corresponds to the entire State of Himachal; this he has done on the authority of Rahul Sankrityayana. But I do not agree with him. It is clearly mentioned in the Baijnath prasasti that Trigarta and Jalandhar, two separate kingdoms, were governed by two different kings and the account of Hieun Tsang nowhere describes Jalandhar as being a hilly tract. The confusion of Jalandhar and Trigarta as being synonymous persists in the author's mind throughout the book. Unfortunately, our literary texts do not indicate precise geographical boundaries of the kingdoms nor exact identifications of diverse tribes. There is need to do further research into this area objectively.

These coins are sufficient testimony of the contacts Himachal had with the plains of northern India through trade and communications during the Mauryan and post-Mauryan period. The discovery of coins from Chamba or elsewhere does not necessarily mean that the Greeks or Persians ruled there. They only indicate that those places were frequented by traders or existed on ancient trade routes.

Quite a few wrong observations need to be corrected. It has been unanimously accepted by all scholars that the Mahabharata war took place around 3100 BC, and not at the dawn of the Christian era as stated by the author. So far, nothing except Indo-Greek coins, has been found here to indicate that the Indo-Greeks including Menander ruled over any part of Himachal.

The evidence gleaned from the coins has to be corroborated by evidence provided by other sources such as literary works, epigraphs, etc. Most significant from the artistic viewpoint is the evidence furnished by the sculptured figures on the coins. From this viewpoint, the Vrishni coins are the most significant. The sculptural style of the figures is a clear indication of the period of these coins. Similarly, some coins such as the Audumbara ones and others feature structures possibly sacred, with tiered roofs. They prove the antiquity of temple architectural style which still exists in this region.

The author has performed the difficult task of piecing together the scattered threads of the history of Himachal State with remarkable skill and fairly convincingly. I strongly feel that these coins have much more to them than the limited scope set by the author for himself. A useful book for students of Himalayan history.

Subhashini Aryan is an expert on Himalayan art.

EXPLOITED CHILDREN IN INDIA

By Sukumar Singh

Published by Shila Singh, 1989, pp. 244, Rs. 35.00

JUVENILE JUSTICE IN INDIA: POLICY, PROGRAMME AND PERSPECTIVE

By S.P. Srivastava

Ajanta Publications, 1989, pp. 302, Rs. 200.00

The problem of the child in the Third World is that it knows no childhood. The Principles embodied in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959) remain pious hopes. Principle 9 says, "The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic in any form. The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or normal development." One wonders what that means to the children of Sivakasi. One also wonders if they know that the Forty Second Amendment to our Constitution has made it the duty of the State to direct its policy towards securing "that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment."

Sukumar Singh has made an in-depth study of the problems of the child in India. He surveys the fields of child welfare, child labour, elementary education and laws relating to child labour. He has obviously done his home-work. Starting from the "Forward" (sic), however, the book is unreadable. Bad English has found conspirators in execrable editing and proof-reading. Considering the wealth of information which the author possesses, however, he would do well to make another attempt. He appears to have got the publishing done himself. He might consider approaching a reputed publisher.

Dr. S.P. Srivastava focuses on juvenile justice, with special reference to the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986. His book is designed to serve as resource material for social science teachers, researchers and child welfare functionaries. The author is of the view that the juvenile treatment facilities are looked upon by their beneficiaries as forms of punitive detention and says that the key issue in juvenile corrections is how to tilt the balance in favour of non-institutional correctional measures. He advocates public participation in the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency and a restoration of the tradition of volunteerism, "which in the past has been the distinguishing feature of Indian society and culture."

Raju Ramachandran, is a practising lawyer in the Supreme Court, New Delhi.

Readers who have not sent in their subscriptions for the year 1990 please do so immediately as the year is coming to a close.

Thank You

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Dear Editor. . .

I have received the January/February 1990 edition of *The Book Review* and I must commend you and your staff for a great publication. The design is fantastic and of course the contents are very good.

If I can be of help in getting your publication known in the United States please let me know. My good friend Nikhil Chakravartty got me to subscribe and support your publication.

HAROLD LEVENTHAL, New York City

I was happy to learn from your letter of May 7 that the Trust has become functional. I enclose my life membership contribution.

Congratulations on the new format. It is excellent.

S. GUHAN, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Madras

I went to the US in Aug'88 and on my return last week for a visit, I found copies of *The Book Review* among my stack of mail. The new format is excellent. It is heartening to note that *The Book Review* has now been established on a surer footing.

SALEEM PEERADINA, Bombay

May I make a request? When I write anything in future for *The Book Review*, would you please treat it as a labour of love? That is one small way by which I can show my admiration for what you are doing.

H.Y. SHARADA PRASAD, New Delhi

I have a request to you. I live in a region which is backward in terms of availability of books. So I find it impossible to get a book unless address of publisher is also given, in which case V.P.P. is possible. Please mention address of publisher in full, whenever it is some relatively uncommon publisher.

C.R. WALIMBE, Shivpuri

We have seen your new format of *The Book Review*. It is very exciting and we look forward to seeing new issues. However, you can use more photographs and illustrations to liven it up.

BIPIN SHAH, Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad, India

We have established an Afro Asian Book Council (AABC). AABC is based on the New Delhi Declaration which was made at the end of the first Afro Asian Publishing Conference jointly organised by NBT/CAPEXIL during the last Delhi World Book Fair. You may wish to inform your readers about AABC through *The Book Review* Besides publishers, authors, critics, designers, printers can also become members of the AABC.

A. MACHWE, Afro-Asian Book Council, 4649, B/21, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi

I enclose a donation of Rs. 500/- to *the Book Review* Literary Trust. Please send me a receipt.

I enjoy reading *The Book Review* and I look forward to getting the issues.

SRIRAM PANCHU, Madras

My basic suggestion would be not to ask someone to review a book because he has name and fame in some sphere or the other. The two reviews in that issue (March/April) I found most irrelevant were Sharada Prasad on Ingmar Bergman (Prasad missed the entire point of that tortured book), and Gopal Gandhi's review of Vikram Seth's poems—not only is it an agglutination of literary critical and romantic words, but it commits the ultimate sin of showing off in (what is to me) a foreign language, without even the courtesy of a translation.

The Book Review, with warps and all, is the best thing of its kind I have seen in this country. Excuse my querulousness and keep up the good work.

S. KRISHNAN, Madras

Congrats on the new format and the much improved varied collection of reviews. So pleased we kept on with our subscription.

J.P.F. FURST, Shillong

I am prisoner undergoing life sentence in central prison of Hyderabad. I came to know that you have written by you *The Book Review*. I much inclination to reading above the books. But I can't afford to purchase above the book. Because I am confined between the four walls. I humbly request you to kindly send at free at cost by the post. If you would consider my request.

B. VENKATESH, Central Prison, Hyderabad

It is learnt that *The Book Review* which is being published by you is of innovative and brilliant. I have much inclination to go through the issues. I am a life term prisoner undergoing sentence here and I could not afford to pay the subscription rates due to my pathetic financial position. I request that I may kindly be provided the issues of *The Book Review* regularly at free of cost considering under humanitarian & sympathic grounds. I hope my request would be considered favourably.

G. ARJUNA RAO, Central Prison, Hyderabad

LIFE MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

When *The Book Review Literary Trust* was set up in October 1989, we had announced a Life Membership Scheme for individuals on payment of Rs. 500. The response to this scheme has been truly heart-warming and we would like to thank all those who have joined in the scheme and helped us to start building a corpus of funds for the Trust. However, this excellent offer will lapse at the end of Decenmber 1990. All the subscription rates, annual and life membership, are to be revised upwards in January 1991. So those who wish to avail of this offer should send in their cheques/drafts for Rs. 500 (plus Rs. 10 towards bank charges) immediately.

Hurry! Offer open only till December 1990!

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ECONOMICS

Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India-Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed.). A collection of essays, strongly rooted in primary documentation in Indian and European languages which provides a comparative perspective to historians of India in this period. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 190.00.

District Planning: A Handbook - R.P. Misra (ed). The volume deals with concepts of spatial planning, district planning and revitalising Panchayati Raj. Concept Publishing Company, 1990, Rs. 300.00.

Resources, Institutions and Strategies: Operation Flood and Indian Dairying - Martin Doornbos and K.N. Nair. Forming number four in the Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives series, this is a companion volume to *Dairy Aid And Development*. The contributors analyse the factors responsible for the growth of the 'Anand Pattern' which has been chosen as the model for institutional intervention under OF and deal comprehensively with the original growth and impact of the Anand pattern of dairy cooperatives, to issues relating to the resource base, environmental implications, and questions of equity and dependence arising in the context of the programme. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 295.00.

Waters of Hope: Himalaya-Ganga Development and Cooperation for A Billion People - B.G. Verghese. The author makes an in-depth study of the Himalaya-Ganga-Brahmaputra-Barak-Meghna system straddling five nations and inhabited by the largest concentration of the world's most poor living in one of the richest natural resource regions anywhere. Envisioning a bold new strategy of integrated water resource development within a framework of regional cooperation to correct this extraordinary paradox, the book sounds a cautious note of hope. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 295.00.

Social Expenditure—1960-1990 : Problems of Growth And Control - Prepared by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris. Comprises the recommendations of a group of experts to the OECD. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 56.00.

Fiscal Policy and the Poor - Anand P. Gupta. The book seeks to answer some important questions like what the fiscal policy achieved, who bears the tax burden and who gains from government expenditure in India. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 45.00.

The World Bank Annual Report 1990. A growing consciousness of future development strategy is emerging, aimed at sustaining the region's dynamic economic growth over the past decade, according to this report.

Housing and Urbanization : A Study of India - Cedric Pugh. This book is about the possibility of developing accessible, practical and habitable low income housing in India based on the implementation of three constructs—affordability, cost-recovery and replicability. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 250.00.

Pricing for Welfare: Petroleum Products in India - Geeta Gouri. The study effectively puts forward a point of view which will be of interest to planners, policy makers and others engaged in the formulation of pricing policies for public sector undertakings, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1989, Rs. 35.00.

Project Appraisal and Planning for Developing Countries - I.M.D Little & J.A. Mirrlees. Deals with the economic rationale of social cost benefit analysis in developing countries and outline practice procedures for evaluating investment projects. Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 60.00.

Sardar Sarovar Project : A Promise For Plenty - M.T. Pathak (ed.). A compilation of papers by five experts who were associated with the planning of Sardar Sarovar Project in Narmada Planning Group. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 75.00.

Human Response Development : Exploring Transformational Values - S.K. Chakraborty (ed.). Foreword by Bede Griffiths. At a time when Indian organizations and management are seen to be struggling to strike roots in their indigenous culture and ethos this collection of writings by a score of individuals from diverse walks of life would be immensely rewarding reading. Wiley Eastern Limited, 1990, price not stated.

Work For Wages in South Asia - Mark Holmstrom (ed.). The book addresses some of the terms on which labour has been employed now and in the past and how the parties to the contract have seen their relationship and acted in consequence. Manohar Publications, 1990, Rs. 200.00.

POLITICS AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

Diversity And Dominance in Indian Politics - Vol. I: Changing Bases of Congress Support - Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy (eds.) This study provides an integrated overview of the functioning of the Congress in different regions of the country while also examining the striking changes which have occurred within the party itself as a consequence of shifts in the political environment over the last three decades. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 235.00.

Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century - Joseph T. O'Connell, Milton Israel, Willard J. Oxtoby, W.H. Mcleod & J.S. Grewal (eds.). The twenty-four essays that make up this unique anthology subject the Sikh question to a rigorous critical scrutiny. Manohar Publications, 1990, price not stated.

What is Civilization And Other Essays - Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. Second in the series of the Collected Works of A.K. Coomaraswamy in the IGNCA's publication programme, the twenty essays comprising this volume ask fundamental questions which are both piercing and incisive in Coomaraswamy's inimitable style. Oxford University Press & Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, 1989, Rs. 250.00.

Indian Affairs : The Political Dimension. A.G. Noorani. This volume describes the debasement of Indian democracy in the wake of the declaration of emergency and through the Rajiv Gandhi era. A collection of the author's articles written for newspapers over two decades. Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 200.00.

Indian Affairs : The Constitutional Dimension - A.G. Noorani. One of the two volumes comprising a collection of articles by the author, this is a critique of the various factors that activate the Indian Constitution. Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 200.00.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Economic Consequences of the Gulf War - Kamran Mofid. This study details the catastrophic effect of the conflict on the economies of Iran and Iraq and on the region as a whole, looking in particular at its impact on oil production and exports, foreign exchange earnings and foreign trade, and agricultural performance. The author questions the immediate future of the region, pointing out that regional stability is an essential pre-condition to the process of rebuilding. Routledge, 1990, $ 30.00.

Independent Namibia : Problems and Prospects - Vijay Gupta (ed.). Starting out with a politico-historical account of Namibia's long drawn out struggle for freedom, the study highlights the problems which independent Namibia faces. Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 150.00.

ART AND CULTURE

Theatre and The World : Essays on Performance and Politics of Culture - Rustom Bharucha. Breaking new ground in perspective and style, these essays have been regarded as landmarks in theatre criticism. Manohar Publications, 1990, Rs. 250.00.

Kalatattvakosa-Vol. I: A Lexicon of Fundamental Concepts of The Arts - Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan (General editor) and Bettina Baumer (editor). This volume forms part of the series by the same name, and attempts to explore the essence and blossoming of some fundamental concepts. Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1990, Rs. 200.00.

SOCIOLOGY

The Human Dimension of Development: Perspectives from Anthropology - Hari Mohan Mathur (ed). This volume attempts both to enhance awareness of what anthropology can do as also to bring within easy reach papers reflecting anthropological thinking on some contemporary development issues. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 350.00.

State and Society in India : Studies in Nation-building -T.K Oommen. The book which presents a bold and refreshing analysis, characterises the Indian polity as constituting a large number of 'nations' and 'ethnics', and the Indian genius as one of gradual transformation, piece meal accretion and cautious reconciliation. Therefore, the author argues that the real task of nation-building entails nurturing pluralism in all contexts—values, technology and culture. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 190.00.

RELIGION

The Sikh Moral Tradition - Nripender Singh. A refreshingly probing study based on historical evidence of the ethical perceptions of the Sikh Community at the turn of the century. Manohar Publications, 1990, Rs. 250.00.

EDUCATION

On Being A Teacher - Amrik Singh (ed.) Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Zakir Hussain. Fifteen teachers come together to reflect on how it feels to be a teacher, problems faced in the course of their careers and how they solved them. Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 150.00.

TRAVELOGUE

The Gilgit Game : The Explorers of the Western Himalayas 1865-95 - John Keay. As with John Keay's *When Men and Mountains Meet*, this is the first narrative account of one of the most intriguing stories of exploration. Oxford University Press, 1979 & published in Pakistan in 1990 by arrangement with John Murray (Publishers) Ltd. for sale in India and Pakistan only, price not stated.

Intrepid Itinerant : Manuel Godinho and his Journey from India to Portugal in 1663. John Correia - Afonso (ed.) Translation of the Portuguese text by Vitalio Lobo and John Correia-Afonso. The original text of the Mannel Godinho's colourful and fascinating account of his journey from India to Portugal is a travel classic of the seventeenth century. Published in 1665 and enjoying the subsequent Portuguese editions, this is the first English translation. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 225.00.

LITERATURE

Cosmopolis - Edited by Ines Reader. Urban Stories by Women. Cleis Press, Pittsburgh, U.S.A., 1990, price not stated.

Daffodils On Fire and Other Stories - Mridula Garg. Published to great acclaim in Hindi first, the eighteen stories in this collection are remarkable for their sensitivity and wit. National Publishing House, 1990, Rs. 100.00.

Myth, Ritual and Shakespeare: A study of Critical Theory and Practice - Rajiva Verma. Examines the theory and practice of a bewildering variety of 'myth and ritual criticism'. Spantech Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 200.00.

WB Yeats and Indian Tradition - Sankaran Rabindran. A critical account of the poet's development in terms of his awareness and understanding of the Indian concept of the Self which has moulded the cultural and philosophical ethos in India. Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990, 125.00.

GENERAL

Information India - 1989-90: Global View - S.P. Agrawal & J.C Agrawal. The book provides a panaromic view of important events of the last one year. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990, 500.00.

FOR THE YOUNG

Jawaharlal Nehru - Stephen Ashton. Written primarily for the younger readers, the book is published as part of the British Library's activities to commemorate the centenary of Jawaharlal Nehru. Oxford University Press, 1990, price not stated.

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NEW RELEASES

CHAMBERS POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD

by J. Denis Derbyshire and Ian Derbyshire

Political Systems of the World is a clearly presented guide to world politics. It is divided into three major sections: Part 1 makes a comparative assessment of political systems of government and political ideologies throughout the world. Part 2, the largest section, give a concise and up-to-date description of the different political systems in each of the world's sovereign states. 165 nation states are covered, grouped into 9 geographical regions. The information provided for each country covers up-to-date social and economic data, key political features, current politial system in operation and an outline political history.

Part 3 devoted to the world's remaining 55 semi-sovereign states, colonies and dependencies as well as regional and global organisations such as the UN, EEC and NATO.

A fact-filled of reference for all students and observers of world politics, the work includes a wealth of tables, data sources, maps and extensive recommended reading lists.

1990 944pp. Rs. 250.00

VALOUR AND SACRIFICE: FAMOUS REGIMENTS OF THE INDIAN ARMY

Gautam Sharma (Lt. Col. retd.)

The creation of the Indian Army has been one of the most unique and successful experiments in national integration, though it was not formed by the British for that purpose. That this succeeded was attributed by some to their strong administration and continued presence in India. While nationalism, forces started gathering momentum it was forecast that "without the British officer and British soldier the martial races of the north would once more eat up the people of the south and that there would be complete anarchy and chaos in the subcontinent".

A lie has been given to these forecasts of doom in ample measure during the last four decades after independence and men from Kashmir to Kerala and Gujarat to Nagaland have fought shoulder to shoulder in repelling aggression, at least four times (1947-48, 1962, 1965 and 1971) carried their trail of glory on United Nations peace missions to far-off Congo, Gaza and Korea and helped their brethren whenever natural calamities struck the motherland. For the first time an attempt has been made here to consolidate the stories of valour and sacrifice of these men, many of them dating back 200 years or more.

Among the infantry regiments included are: Punjab Regiment, Madras Regiment, Grenadiers Regiment, Rajputana Regiment, Rajpur Regiment, Jat Regiment, Sikh Regiment, Dogra Regiment, Garhwal Rifles and Kumaon Regiment.

1989 300 pp. approx. illus. Rs. 150.00

THE SECOND MARATHA CAMPAIGN 1804-1805
Diary of James Young

Edited by D.D. Khanna

James Young's Diary is a very interesting account of the Maratha War campaigns. It is valuable as a regimental level account of the various marches, sieges and engagements, and particularly of the logistics and intelligence work of the East India Company's armies of the period. It is even more interesting because of the unusual freedom with which Young puts down his comments on his superiors, military and civilian.

1990 1 + 204 pp. Rs. 175.00

THE HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE IN FRANCE

by S.R. Maheshwari

The last work discussing certain selected aspects of the French civil service was by Ezra Suleiman: *Politics, Power and Bureaucracy in France:The Administrative Elite* published by Princeton University Press in 1974. Another book on the French civil service was by Brian Chapman: *The Profession of Government*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1959. Both these otherwise useful works are dated. Since 1974, there has been no worthwhile work on the French civil services, which makes the present manuscript most timely. Moreover, it is a full dress study of the French civil service and so a valuable work in its own right.

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by Oleg Volobuyev and Sergei Kuleshov

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ed. by Pranab Kumar Sen

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The eight essays, together with the editor's introduction, explore with a rare sweep large areas of philosophical and non-standard logic. Although it is addressed primarily to those who are interested in the foundations of logic and grammar, advanced students as well as experts, the book avoids needless technicalities and is written throughout in a style which makes it accesible also to non-experts and beginners.

1990 viii + 292 pp. Rs. 200.00

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Constructing Typologies

Veena Das

PROTEST AND CHANGE: STUDIES IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

by T.K. Oommen

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 309, Rs. 235

This is a collection of essays on the theme of social movements. All except three of the ten essays have been published earlier, and two of these are scheduled to appear in other volumes. The essays have been organized around three themes, (a) theory, concepts and methods; (b) macro perspectives and (c) micro perspectives.

The discussion on theory and method is somewhat rambling; this may be understandable if we keep in mind the heterogenous character of the issues involved in the study of social movements. What is perplexing, however, is that some of the most important sociological contributions of the last two decades on the very issues that concern Oommen have been completely ignored by him. As a consequence, we are treated to some extraordinary simplifications where the silence on important texts vies with the banality of the analysis.

It may be pertinent to begin with Oommen's attempt at conceptual clarifications on the definition of social movements. According to his definition, "Movements are neither mere accidents, nor entirely the resultants (sic) of manipulation by leaders and demagogues but the consequence of conscious efforts by men to change systems in the light of past experiences, avoiding pitfalls". Seen as criticism of those who define social movements as either 'accidents' or results of 'manipulations', this amounts to little more than flogging dead horses. Indeed, it is difficult to find Oommen's adversaries in any identifiable serious sociologists. At least since 1968, there has been a paradigmatic shift in sociological theory which does not think of structures any more as the glue of social relations which have a substantive existence. To that extent, the notion that people act in structures (e.g., in the social theory of Talcot Parsons) is of little more than historical interest now. Instead the concern for at least the last two decades has been to conceptualize structure as a property of activity, located in the interactional space between representation and practice. It is because Oommen continues to be located in a sociological theory which sees social structure and social movements in a simple adversarial relationship, that paradigmatic shifts made in the last two decades in theories of society (inspired partly but not exclusively by social theory developed in Europe by such writers as Castoriadis, Touraine, Guattari, Habermas, Bourdieu) seems to have passed him by.

> Movements are neither mere accidents, nor entirely the resultants (sic) of manipulation by leaders and demagogues but the consequence of conscious efforts by men to change systems in the light of past experiences, avoiding pitfalls.

In the positive part of his definition, Oommen emphasizes the element of conscious efforts of men, the thrust towards changing the system and the element of learning from past experience. The conceptual issues arising from these three aspects of social movements, however, are simply left hanging and while he goes on to a superficial discussion of traditional India and the social changes in Indian society. A serious discussion on theory and method would have invited an engagement with the vexed question addressed by most students of social movements—*viz.* how to conceptualize the relation between the level of discourse and the level of praxis in social movements. It is precisely because of the heterogeneity of these two levels that it is now commonly acknowledged that neither an understanding of discourse alone, nor of praxis in isolation is adequate for the study of social movements. Further, the time of representation and the time of doing are not simultaneous leading to a conceptualization of time not only as plural, but also heterogeneous. Therefore, two of the elements in Oommen's definition—viz. the conscious efforts made by men, and the learning from past experience require an understanding of collective creativity in society as well as a theory or rise of novelty in relation to the time of representation and the time of doing. The simple-minded notion of time as consisting of past-present-future does not begin to address the question of how a social movement constructs time so that it can 'avoid pitfalls in the light of past experience'. Thus there is no attempt to take into account the theoretical issues raised by the heterogeneity of discourse and practice in social movements. For the development of the third aspect of Oommen's definition, viz., whether a social movement is geared towards social transformation in the light of the experiences of the past, he would have needed a theory of social criticism but this concept is absent in his discussion except in its naive commonsense meanings.

It is not my case that the merit of a book lies in complete conceptual clarity. Indeed most creative thinkers are compelled to live beyond the conceptual resources of their disciplines and it is the interaction between the construction of the particular and the general that makes for the excitement of sociological research. If, however, one undertakes to write on 'theoretical, conceptual, and methodological' issues then one has the responsibility to see that a field of research is not presented in the distorted and simplistic manner in which it appears in the present book.

If the discussion on theoretical and conceptual issues is hardly enlightening, the attempts to discuss methodological issues does not fare any better. Oommen bemoans the fact that ongoing movements are rarely studied by sociologists (p. 109), but this is not a very responsible statement since a voluminous literature has been produced since 1968 in which the student movements, the feminist movement, worker movements (including Solidarity), peace movements and ecological movements have been studied precisely as ongoing movements. One of the interesting methodological discussion has been on the adequacy of observational models for the study of processes and events such as social movements. In one form or the other, attempts have been made to replace observational models by dialogical or reflexive models in sociology and anthropology precisely because of the problems with the concept of the gaze in the study of events that have not crystallized and are still in the making. Oommen, having ignored this development completely, is still strug-

Veena Das, teaches sociology in the Delhi University.

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gling with the methodological difficulties of defining 'boundary limitations' and 'units and levels of observation'. But such problems as defining boundaries and specifying levels of observation are far more suitable for those aspects of social reality that can be imaged on solid structures. Despite the fact that Oommen repeatedly uses words like social process and temporal process to define social movements, his methodological concerns stem from the manner in which he spatializes time, and privileges structure over action.

This theoretical underpinning has an impact on the way in which substantive issues are taken up in the book. Because the voice of the participants of the movements are absent in his descriptions of social movements, Oommen is principally concerned with constructing typologies and placing labels on social movements. For example, he distinguishes between movements in which the collectivity is defined by biological ties, primordial ties, and civil ties—a modification of the classification suggested by Edward Shils in his attempts to conceptualize civil society. The rationale for Oommen's three-fold classification is that they can be placed in a "fixity-flexibility" continuum. Thus women and Blacks form collectivities in which there is complete fixity; ethnic groups, caste groups, or religious groups come in the middle of the 'fixity-flexibility' continuum; worker movements and agrarian movements are seen as based on flexible collectivities. Each of these movements is then distinguished by the goal of the movement according to a threefold classification of goals that are exclusively symbolic, exclusively instrumental, or a combination of both.

While it is common in sociological literature to distinguish between instrumental and symbolic action—the former relating means to ends and the latter relating signifiers to signifieds, its application to goals leads Oommen to make a sharp distinction between reallocation of wealth and power (instrumental goals) and redefinition of status and privilege (symbolic goals). He then makes an assessment of the consequences of a movement for the system. However, because in making this assessment the voice of the participants of movements is reduced to silence and because the tendency is to label goals through the eye of the researcher rather than the participants, the judgements seem to be distorted. Let me illustrate this with one example.

❖

Oommen is principally concerned with constructing typologies and placing labels on social movements. . . .he distinguishes between movements in which the collectivity is defined by biological ties, primordial ties, and civil ties . . . The rationale for Oommen's three-fold classification is that they can be placed in a "fixity-flexibility" continuum.

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On the whole question of women's movements, Oommen's view is that these do not pose any threat to the State since they cannot aim for a territorial redefinition of the State. Further, when they pursue what he calls symbolic goals, women's movements do not even have the potential to assume a vanguard role in bringing fundamental social transformation that worker movements based upon civil ties can perform. Now while it is true that women's movements do not pursue the goal of setting up a separate nation state from which men have been excluded, some of them have critiqued the very basis of modern nation states by questioning the centrality of territory in human affairs, by interrogating the dehumanizing aspects of bureaucratic rationality, as well as the patriarchal nature of the modern state which tries to define and control the sexuality of women by presuming to define the spheres of 'normality'. Only an empiricist understanding of the State would fail to recognize this as anything less than a challenge to the very notion of the State as a form of governmentality. Similarly, Oommen has no hesitation in defining the goal of increasing or decreasing age at marriage as a 'symbolic' goal geared towards redefinition of status and privilege rather than resistance to modes of power. Had he given any space to women's voices he would have seen that such issues as age at marriage, age of consent and right to abortion pertain to the whole sphere of redefinition of sexuality through which women have tried to gain control over their own bodies. What is an issue of privilege and status for Oommen is an issue of power for women, who experience the power of patriarchal norms not in the form of sovereign power but disciplinary power of the State and the family.

As would be evident, Oommen's discussion of macro structures suffers from completely empiricist understanding of the State. When he discusses the responses of the State to challenges posed by separatist movements, he assumes the legitimacy of the State to the extent that even terror used by the agencies of the Sate in contravention to its own laws as happened in the crushing of the tribal movements in border regions such as Nagaland is construed as a 'response' to the violence of the movements. Because Oommen has no vision of the questions raised by the attempts of social movements to establish control over historicity, such issues as the relation between nationalist movement and local movements, or ethnicity as resource to challenge the legally instituted 'illegalities' of the state that are at the forefront in the literature on social movements, do not even get a cursory mention. I see this as flowing directly from his inability to give form to the aspects of collective creativity and temporality due to an naive empiricism that informs his view of social reality.

When Oommen considers ethnographic examples that have some density, his views are well informed. For example, his discussion on the impact of fragmentation of the peasantry for agrarian movements, the relation of political parties to peasant movements, the articulation between peasant movements and national level politics offer interesting insights and are far more well informed than his theoretical forays into the nature of the State, epistemology of monotheistic religions, or theories of communication. While essays published in journals or conference volumes have a tentative character, to collect them between the hard covers of a book often requires concerted work by the author on both content and form. In this case it is a pity that the two more well researched essays in the volume (Chapter 8 and 9) are completely outflanked by the triviality of the rest. ❑

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Saffron Over Tricolour

Bhabani Sen Gupta

THE BROTHERHOOD IN SAFFRON: THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH AND HINDU REVIVALISM

Edited by Walter K. Anderson and Shridhar D. Damle

Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 317, Rs. 150.00

When BJP makes an open, declared electoral bid for power, the RSS cannot be far behind. Indeed, it is not behind at all, but at the forefront of the BJP rathyatra towards the ramparts of power in Delhi. This phenomenon alone justifies a review of the Anderson-Damle biography of the RSS though it is four years old. The book bears, indeed compels, reading by students of Indian politics, expert or lay, at the current watershed in this country's career as a secular democracy when the secular ethos of the State is being directly challenged by politicalised Hindu revialism spearheaded by BJP, an affiliate of the RSS.

Biographies of Indian political parties, except the Congress, do not exist in abundance. RSS however, is lucky with six biographies in English alone and several in Marathi and Hindi. Evidently, the mystique of Hindu revivalism as a political force has drawn larger scholarly and journalistic attention than the Marxist parties in India. The CPI-M has only a single biography; the CPI another (along with CPI-M) after the old party split in 1964. Two highly readable biographies of the Jan Sangh must also be treated as studies of the RSS.

Walter Anderson and Shridhar Damle have written the most readable and instructive biography of the RSS. This book is strong in objectivity and unbiased historical and structural narration and analysis. The two authors treat their subject with empathy and respect but without deference. They combine historical narrative with social science analysis laced with measured helpings of references to religiosity and spiritualism of Hindus. They offer lively sketches of the three leaders of the RSS who span three decades of the life history of the organisation—Hegdewar, Golwalkar and Deoras—tracing carefully the impact of each on the "family", that is, the RSS organisation, and its political affiliates, Jan Sangh and then, since 1980, BJP. They introduce us quite elaborately to the organisational order and map of the RSS, to the modalities of building a disciplined spread of well-groomed cadres dedicated to the cult of the "family" and to the hierarchy of its leadership. With considerable insight, Anderson and Damle bring to our mind the philosophical orientation of the RSS, distilled from the Shakti cult of Hinduism.

> *Biographies of Indian political parties, except the Congress, do not exist in abundance. RSS, however, is lucky with six biographies in English alone and several in Marathi and Hindi. Evidently, the mystique of Hindu revivalism as a political force has drawn larger scholarly and journalistic attention than the Marxist parties in India.*

We get introduced to two RSS's. One is a virile reformist Hindu organisation that is committed to rebuild Hindus in the mould of patriotic warriors who are convinced that only a united Hindu "family" can construct a strong invincible State free of the degrading vices of untouchability, worn-out totems and taboos and also of gross social and cultural inequities. The Hindutva of the RSS claims direct inheritance from Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and other sages of the Indian renaissance. The fountainhead of its strength is the *Gita*, the advaita vedanta philosophy of the ancient Hindus and the charisma of the epic heroes—Ram, Arjun, Krishna. "RSS theoreticians maintain that the social body functions well only when individuals perform their economic, social and religious duties (dharma). The founders of the RSS concluded that the Hindu social body was weak and disorganised because dharma was neither clearly understood nor correctly observed. While the disintegration of Hindu society was perceived as advancing at a rapid pace in the contemporary period, the malady is traced back at least to the Islamic invasions of India (approximately 1000 AD) when it is alleged creative Hindu thought ceased to inform society about new ways to respond to changing conditions." The founders of the RSS—born in the year 1925 in the immediate aftermath of the worst period of Hindu-Muslims riots in India prior to the mid-40s—retrieved from India's hoary past and the soul of Hinduism a grammar of social and national bodybuilding. Under Hegdewar, the RSS remained almost entirely a Maharashtrian organisation. It might have captured thousands of Hindu hearts. It did not fire the Indian imagination.

> *The volume leaves no doubt in any one's mind with its transparent portrait of the RSS that in the pristine depths of Hindu fundamentalism lie, not so hidden from discriminating eyes, the ideology and political fabric of an authoritarian State flying the saffron banner of Hindutva.*

It is the *other* RSS, the political movement, which brought the organisation into prominence. That was in the 1960s when the original hesitation to roll into the political life of the nation yielded to a bold decision to create political affiliates. Before then, the RSS had won the appreciation of the Indians in the North as well as of the front-ranking leaders of the Congress party, with its dedicated service to the hapless streams of refugees that had poured into India from Pakistan immediately after the Partition. However, the alleged links of Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, with the RSS (Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel who made an enquiry, wrote to Nehru emphatically that there was no evidence that the RSS was involved in the assassination) had led to the first ban on the organisation in 1978. The intricate negotiations between RSS leaders and Patel, in which certain ranking leaders of the Congress played a helpful role, brought the RSS on the fringe of politics. There was a time when the RSS sided with Patel in his political differences with Nehru in return for which Patel supported the move to open the doors of the Congress to RSS members. If Nehru had not put his foot down against door-opening after the death of Patel in 1950, the RSS would have infiltrated the Congress in the 50s with consequences which can now be quite confidently imagined.

The political profile of the RSS is captured in the last two chapters of the book, but, even before, the reader gets intimations of the new incarnation. The "family", however, is in full shape before the RSS launches its political career.

Bhabani Sen Gupta is a commentator on international affairs and is the author of several books.

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The RSS, which places very stringent requirements on its members, is not likely to become a mass membership organization. The continuous testing of the members' zeal and self-discipline tends to turn away all but the most ardent supporters. However, the RSS was never meant to mobilize on a mass scale. Hedgewar speculated that it needed to train only one to three percent of Hindu men to achieve the cultural revolution. The cadre were to be the leading social group who—endowed with organizing capacity, social respect, and strong determination—would eventually assume the leadership role in the revival of the Hindu "nation." The RSS expected each member to be a disciplined Hindu activist whose activity would carry him outside the RSS.

Hedgewar and his associates in the young RSS believed that character building was, in itself, sufficient to achieve the desired social and political transformation of India. Those who became virtuous through self-discipline would be moved individually to revitalize society. In the pre-independence period the RSS established no newspapers; it organized no student groups, trade unions, or political groups; the cadre engaged in no underground revolutionary activities (at least not in the name of the RSS). Indeed, full-time RSS workers were discouraged from engaging in politics. Many militant Hindu revivalists, such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, ridiculed the apolitical orientation of the RSS. Militant activists such as Nathuram Godse, left the RSS. Many RSS activists wanted the RSS itself to take a more assertive role in the transformation of Indian society, and some prominent office bearers resigned when it did not.

From *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*

This career is profiled in the book with a wealth of information spiced with sharp interpretative perceptions from the creation of the Jan Sangh party under the leadership of Dr Shyamaprasad Mukherjee through the short, eventful lifespan of the amalgam of the Janata party, to the launching of BJP. In this colourful unfolding of a quite complex political play, we see the increasing influence of RSS on its political affiliates. The narration ends with the election of Lal Krishna Advani as BJP president in 1986, his second exaltation to that high position, and it sketches the upcoming fundamentalist upsurge around the Ram-mandir-Babri-mosque controversy in Ayodhya.

In this drama we find a dynamic relationship coming into focus between BJP and the RSS-supported mass-passion organisations like VHP and Bajrang Dal. The narrative spotlights an important point: throughout a volatile period in Indian politics, RSS is single-minded in the pursuit of its political objective which is the establishment of Hindu rashtra even when other organisations, including BJP, at times flirt with secular parties. The RSS called the final shots in Jan Sangh's relations with the Janata Dal as it did once again in getting the BJP leadership snap the party's ties with the Janata-Dal and the National Front. The single-minded pursuit of its goal has to be seen in the context of another very important development: expansion of the RSS "family" to the North Indian Hindi belt, and the shifting of the centre of its political activity to this crucial area from less fertile Maharashtra where it is yet to subvert the mass base of the Congress and where it has a difficult buddy in the less sophisticated Shiv Sena.

The Anderson-Damle biography of RSS is instructive also for another gift of political scholarship. It reveals more clearly than the other biographies of RSS how close the Congress has been, throughout the 20th century, to the Hindutva of the RSS as long as Hindutva did not develop its political paradigms. Vivekananda, Tilak, Munje, Madan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Vir Savarkar: these are among the haloed personalities of the Indian nationalist pantheon, revered as much by the soldiers of the Indian National Congress as by followers of the Hindu Mahasabha and other non-secular organisations. Mahatma Gandhi used Hinduism and Hindu symbols to mobilise the masses for his struggle and if the RSS did not project its fundamental objection to non-violence as the principal weapon of that struggle, there might have been cooperative linkages even in the 20s between the Indian National Congress and the Hindu revivalist bodies of which the RSS was then the just-born enfant terrible. Nehru's leadership of the Congress increased the distance between the premier nationalist organisation and the Hindu revivalist bodies. However, the Hindu-Muslim divide in the latter half of the 40s, leading to the partition of the subcontinent, brought the Hindu revivalists, especially the RSS and the Congress closer together. The closeness could have acquired a political realism if the RSS had not been held guilty by public opinion of complicity in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. As already noted, Sardar Patel was much more open to the RSS than was Nehru; he sought and obtained RSS help in persuading the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to accede to India.

The point that one must keep in mind is that Hindutva never lost its ability to infiltrate the Congress concept of secularism. If the Congress-I tried to shift towards Hindutva during the 80s, it was more than a tactical move on the part of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi; it was also a timely response to the feelings of the high-caste, middle-class, urban Congress-I followers who, like many others outside the party, tended to be more Hindu than secular-Indian in the last two decades.

This biography of the RSS will probably leave on the reader's mind a favourable impression of the "family." Its principal leaders had been revolutionaries and/or saints; the organisation is built on principled lines of austerity, discipline, loyalty to the leadership and the creed, and service, all emotive to the average Hindu. Its cadres are not corruputible. The RSS, at the same time, could not remain free of factionalism even before it opened up a mass political front; recent proliferation of factionalism in more than one state is the result of its rapid expansion and a greater mingling of the "family" and its political affliates, particularly BJP.

Anderson and Damle have done an excellent job by bringing the RSS to the Indian reading public in its best objective shape. This is necessary to give the Indian enough food for thought to choose between Hindu fundamentalism and democratic secularism. The volume leaves no doubt in any one's mind with its transparent portrait of the RSS that in the pristine depths of Hindu fundamentalism lie, not so hidden from discriminating eyes, the ideology and political fabric of an authoritarian State flying the saffron banner of Hindutva. Whatever else the RSS "family" may do, it cannot convince the reader who is not already seduced that it stands for democracy, the fundamental human rights, and their practice in a Hindu Rashtra with an equal status, political and social, for the majority and the national minority of well over 100 million Muslims. ❑

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Subsumed Conversations

Badal Mukherji

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN ECONOMISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN MEASURING ECONOMIC CHANGE IN RURAL INDIA

Edited by Pranab Bardhan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, 288 pages, Rs. 200.00

This is quite a collection of essays, rare in the sense that individually, each is of a very high order of competence. The papers were presented in a conference in Bangalore in August 1985. I have one great regret after reading the book—it reports none of the *actual conversations* amongst the participants that would have taken place in such a distinguished gathering. That is a pity. Even a severely edited version of the confrontations would have been delightful. As it stands the 'conversation' is subsumed, one has to sort of look for it.

What comes out as somewhat of a surprise is that the usual view of economists and anthropologists held by outsiders as well as practitioners of the two disciplines themselves is often highly inaccurate. The view I have in mind is that of the economist who borrows a little calculus here, a probability distribution there and obfuscates everything afterwards with overall sloppy equations, and the anthropologist who has to (as Bardhan puts it) smell of cowdung and manure, can accept and tolerate every hardship and toil but one—the antics of the aforementioned mathematical economic quack. It is where one carefully studies, say Breman's and Vaidyanathan's articles in this book on research methodology, or contrasts Bhattacharya and Chattopadhyay with Wadley and Derr that an altogether different idea emerges. The economists are struggling with large sets of data and—the serious ones—asking for help from social anthropologists to improve the quality of information gathered from the micro-level. The social anthropologists on the other hand are trying to impress upon the economist the complexity of structures (Bremen), interconnections and perceptions (Wadley-Derr) and the difficulty if not the impossibility of sharp generalizations. The degree of detail that the latter can analyze and incorporate, however, reflects a deeper methodological concern in which *it is the anthropologist who is far closer to a mathematician* than the economist can ever hope to be!

Let me elaborate. For a mathematician the statement "Z is a function of W, X and Y" means knowing W,X and Y, and knowing the "functional relation", Z is completely known. It leaves no room at all for an exclamation from a bystander to the effect that a teeny tiny error exists. If the understanding of a village community involves tracking a myriad of factors and if discovering how those factors build upto (i.e. are functionally related to), a given outcome requires twenty-five years of hard work, then please do so. If it involves spending years in training field surveyors who have the ability to understand and sensibly communicate with the audience (modestly stated, "participate without fatigue") then do please undertake the trouble. And so on. Why all this fuss? Precisely because the anthropologist, without using mathematical symbols is trying to attain a degree of accuracy and specificity that is only attainable in mathematics. The economists, on the other hand, and when serious, are urgently asking for help. They do need to identify overall patterns, and to build them up from smaller to larger trends, over space as well as over time, to claim any independent justification fo their efforts. It is *then*, using members and equations as they do, that are deviating from full mathematical rigour in search of those patterns!

Which brings me to the other-related-running commentary—which is on small verses large samples or micro versus macro. The celebrity of macro theory, J.M. Keynes, himself a contributor to the theory of probability, laid the claim for independent macro enquiry on the difficulty of perceiving aggregate outcomes from individual experiments. The cycle has now come around full circle; economists are trying to know from anthropologists what kind of macro questions to ask so as to back up those macro generalizations with. (In this endeavour, I perceive a problem similar to one that has been intensely researched by mathematicians in the last twenty-five odd years. Suppose we are trying to construct the map of the coast line of a country by taking pictures from a high altitude baloon fitted with a camera. Obviously, there will be significant approximations to the 'real' coast line depending upon the power of the camera relative to the height of the baloon. A certain picture emerges and we make an estimate of the length of the coast line—suppose it works out at 1 kilometer. Now we get a camera on the same baloon but twice as powerful and take a picture of half of the previously covered area. What can happen is a major surprise, indeed, shock. With the more powerful camera, much more of the twists and turns of the coastline are picked up and once we measure them we come out with—you guessed it—one kilometer!

Nothing has gone wrong; the extra power has revealed complexities completely overlooked by the weaker lens. So what do you do? There is a lurking fear that this process might never end; a large enough lens will start tracking the pattern created by each and every grain of sand on the edge of the shore. So, how much detail you want is an unanswerable question; it depends on what you want to do with it, but the awareness of this process is of crucial importance to the user of the camera. Oxford atlas (or any I know of) simplifies; a geologist looking for Uranium or something will do so at his or her peril.

That, to me, is the way the scholars involved in this workshop are headed. We can only wait with bated breath.

I am skipping the technical details of the articles; any researchers either in empirical problems or methodology will do well to invest the time and effort necessary to master them. ❑

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Progress Report on India's Economic Performance

S. Guhan

THE INDIAN ECONOMY AND ITS PERFORMANCE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Edited by R.A. Choudhury, Shama Gamkhar and Aurobindo Ghose

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, pp. 315 Rs 240.00

The volume includes twenty-four contributions from economists, other academicians, and journalists of which all except three were originally presented at a seminar held in 1985 by the Kirorimal College at Delhi. The three exceptions are contributions from Professor Amartya Sen, Professor Sukhomoy Chakravarty and Dr Raj Krishna which have been included by way of useful background readings related to the concerns of the seminar. As might be expected in any such enterprise, the outcome is a mixed bag in terms not only of perspectives (which is to be welcomed) but also in respect of breadth of analysis and depth of insight. Five or six of the pieces, for instance, are brief interventions in the course of the discussion, interesting but not very substantive; and, at least one of the topics of the seminar, which is the so-called 'New Economic Policy' of the Rajiv Gandhi Government, has become by now dated.

The curtain-raiser for the volume is a progress report on India's post-Independence economic performance, somewhat breezily entitled, "How is India Doing?", by Amartya Sen, originally published in the *New York Review of Books*. On the credit side of the tally, Sen notes how well India has done compared to economic stagnation and low agricultural growth in the pre-Independence period. In free India, growth has been stepped up, food security has been achieved and famines avoided, life expectancy has improved, higher education has expanded, an impressive base established in science and technology, the oil crises have been responded to through successful adjustment and social justice has been promoted through positive discrimination policies. Above all, such a large country with so much diversity has held together.

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The biggest failing is that India continues to tolerate "regular malnutrition and endemic hunger", despite food self-sufficiency. It is not a "gigantic achievement" that the economy produces enough to meet the 'market demand' of the poor in a country where "at least a third of the rural population has regularly—and quietly—gone to bed hungry and malnourished". More generally, and even in comparison with its low-income, slow-growing neighbour Sri Lanka, India's approach to social sciences—whether it is primary education, basic health, the condition of women, or of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes—is, as Sen puts it, "sadly unimaginative and breathtakingly conservative". Sen traces this conservatism to the elitist character of Indian society and politics. Most of the elite come from the upper and middle castes of India's stratified and hierachical Hindu society and much of the leadership of all political parties—from the extreme right to the extreme left—comes from this elite. The elite in India is large and powerful; it includes not just the industrial leaders and the bourgeoisie but also "millions of civil servants, business people, commercial farmers, educators, office workers and small landowners". It is not as if the 'moral and political consciousness' of the Indian elite is unresponsive to human suffering but the responsiveness has a high threshold. When a serious famine threatens, it gets prominent attention through newspapers, and the Indian elite ensures that public intervention is swift and effective in preventing mass starvation but "the quiet presence of non-acute endemic hunger" does not impinge on the elitist consciousness, let alone conscience. This diagnosis leads Sen to a comparison of India with China where development has proceeded on anti-elitist lines and where elitist structures—rural and urban—were 'smashed effectively' This has enabled China to register impressive advances, far outpacing India, in schooling, medical services, nutrition, life expectancy and so on. However, these achievements have been purchased at the high price of the suppression of democratic liberties and a free press. China, unlike India, has witnessed large scale starvation and famine—during the food crisis of 1959–61 anywhere between 16 and 23 million people in China might have died from famine mortality. To Sen, "the question of food and starvation is not unrelated to the issue of liberties, of newspapers, and ultimately of democracy". In this respect, India, because it has not smashed its elite, scores although at the cost of tolerating "persistent orderly hunger".

While Sen's India-China contrast is certainly very interesting, in the absence of further elucidation and elaboration it would appear to stop short of being insightful. It raises at least a couple of tantalizing questions: does the preservation of liberties entail elites? and if so, is it possible to attack elitism without smashing elites? Sen's reply to the first question sounds like "yes" but he is silent on the second. We can only hope that in some subsequent writing he will extend the discussion of the nexus between elites, democracy, and equity (under both dire and daily circumstances). In the course of it, he might perhaps comment on the much maligned Mandal Commission report which is aimed at loosening the stranglehold of the Indian elite, rightly located by Sen in the upper and middle castes, and also on recent events in the Soviet Union in which the syndrome seems to encompass elites, totalitarianism and famine.

That growth is a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition for a sustainable increase in equity is obvious enough but the more interesting question is whether greater equity can itself spur growth instead of having to be just its companion (growth with equity) or its consequence (production first, distribution later from the fruits thereof). In a closely-argued essay Sukhomoy Chakravarty discusses this question in terms of the demand constraint. He points out that traditionally development economists have put the accent on factors specific to the supply-side—savings (domestic and foreign), investment, output—and have argued that given the characteristics of poor developing countries higher growth is mainly a function of removing supply-side bottlenecks. His question, on the other hand, is "whether demand, understood as effective demand, can affect not merely the composition but also growth rate of production, even in a country like India?" His answer is that the demand constraint has in fact operated to slacken growth in important ways: growth in public investment has decelerated since the mid 1960s; the green revolution has not resulted in any wide diffusion of purchasing power in the rural areas; and capital-intensive industrialisation has dampened demand for wage goods. Demand-related factors, and not just increased inefficiency, have also been responsible for the worsening marginal capital-output ratio because of which higher savings have not been translated into higher growth. Chakravarty argues that demand has to be stimulated primarily in terms of home demand because, while he is fully persuaded of the need to step up exports, he feels, because of a variety of factors, that "*at this stage*, India is unlikely to emerge as a leading actor on the export front". In other words, while academic debate might continue on whether or not India should have taken the export bus, the

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bus itself has *by now* moved off. Demand stimulation in the home market will not however be an easy task. It will have to be non-inflationary, oriented towards mass consumption, and consistent with an efficient, productivity-increasing deployment of resources.

Policies relating to how resources are raised and spent are the domain in which the intersection of politics and economics is at once both intense and transparent and the discussion of fiscal policy links with the role of the state and its political economy. Massive tax evasion, heavy reliance on regressive indirect taxes, deficit financing which taxes the poor and the middle classes much more than the rich, and borrowings (necessarily from the rich) which are serviced by taxation (falling heavily on the non-rich) are the inter-related characteristics which go to make the resource mobilisation process inadequate, inefficient, and inequitable. They are referred to by Chakravarty, examined in some detail by Sanjaya Baru (on Resource Mobilization, Resource Allocation and the Economic Strategy) with the discussion being extended to the public distribution system, subsidies, agricultural pricing policy and administered prices by B.B. Bhattacharya (Economic Class and Economic Policy in India) and to a more general framework of class analysis by Dalip Swamy (the Uneasy Coalition of Economic Interests). These useful contributions are, however, only in the nature of cross-sectional cuts at the 'fiscal crisis'. Now that the crisis has assumed something of the character of a tail-spin, one wishes that the subject had been documented and discussed in greater detail and depth.

Raj Krishna's contribution on inter-State disparities in India's development is of outstanding value. Raj Krishna points out how inter-state and intra-state disparities have remained undiminished and have, in some respects, increased over time. The reduction of inter regional ineqality is an important means of poverty reduction because millions of poor households are concentrated in a few regions and their development can bring about a significant reduction of poverty. Besides, a redirection of industrial, and particularly infrastructural, investments in the less-developed regions "can trigger other investments which in turn will generate new employment and income-streams for the poor". The need and scope for such investment are matched because many of the poor regions are blessed with a rich natural resource base and "what keeps them poor is not the paucity of natural resources but the insufficiency of investment". Having said this, Raj Krishna cautions that "the investment package should, however, be tailored to overcome the peculiar constraints and utilize the special endowments of each region. They should also be so designed that they do not reproduce the pathology of gross inequalities within the region". Raj Krishna's detailed analysis of inter-regional inequalities is in terms of six indicators relating to income, poverty and unemployment; agriculture; industry; infrastructure; social services; and resource allocation. At a prescriptive level, Raj Krishna emphasises the importance of infrastructure, multi-level planning, equitable resource allocations (Centre-State and State-District) and commends current and promising new schemes that can contribute to the reduction of inter-regional inequalities. However, Raj Krishna has no programmatic illusions. On what it will take to achieve a substantial redistribution of income or wealth to the poor, including those in the poor areas, Raj Krishna, unlike Sen, is not muted. The desideratum is the "universal politicization and unionization of the poor" which is the "supreme task before all progressive forces—political parties, trade union workers, social workers and the activist intelligentsia" for "if the mass pressure of the poor rises, the will of the present rulers is bound to bend or rulers with the right will will replace them". Elitism, thus, has to be attacked from within and without.

> *. . .while academic debate might continue on whether or not India should have taken the export bus, the bus itself has by now moved off. Demand stimulation in the home market will not however be an easy task. It will have to be non-inflationary, oriented towards mass consumption, and consistent with an efficient, productivity-increasing deployment of resources.*

The only other paper that is specifically addressed to the poverty eradication issue is that by Suresh Tendulkar. It is a brief and illuminating review of the IRDP in which its major shortcomings are discussed; the most important of them is "the failure to forge the crucial linkages between the finance, production and marketing systems" which the poor are unable to forge on their own. Tendulkar emphasises the case for decentralization, not only for raising the economic viability of IRDP beneficiaries, but for accelerating rural development through the diversification of agro-related activities, and the conservation and development of land, forest, water and energy resources. Without such an approach, IRDP will continue to operate in a vacuum i.e. in a stagnating rural economy.

These economy-wide debates are supplemented in the volume by a set of papers devoted to agriculture and industry, the principal production sectors. The papers on agriculture begin with a refreshingly succinct overview by G.S. Bhalla of the pluses and minuses of agricultural development in India since Independence. It is supplemented by contributions from B.M. Bhatia, H. Laxminarayan, and K. Subbarao. Bhatia points out that poverty and rural unemployment can be tackled only if labour is absorbed in agriculture and the productivity of small and marginal farmers is raised. This can happen only if agriculture becomes the centre of all planning. Says Bhatia; "Put agriculture in the lead, let industry follow" Laxminarayan stresses the importance of dry farming technology, the efficient implementation of dry land projects and, following China's example, of the need to diversify crop husbandry with animal husbandry, poultry, fishing and forestry. Subbarao's piece is on agricultural policies rather than on performance. The policy frame has rested on three pillars: investment (eg. irrigation), institutional reform (eg. ceiling, tenancy laws and land consolidation) and incentives (credit, fertilisers, extension). Subbarao notes that in recent years there has been a shift from public investments and institutional reform to a subsidy-oriented developmental strategy. This has yielded results in increasing production but not in feeding the people because the contribution of millions of small and marginal farmers, expecially in the backward States, to incremental output growth has been negligible. He concludes by saying that "now that we have achieved macro-level food security, we should take steps to ensure micro (household)—level food security. The most cost-efficient way of achieving this is to ensure the participation of the poor farmers in the incremental output via appropriate public investment and institutional reform policies", a conclusion that resonates well with Sen's eradication of quiet hunger, Chakravarty's stimulation of demand and Raj Krishna's development of backward areas. Where else can all roads lead but to Rome?

Industry gets much less treatment than agriculture but the main piece here by N.S. Siddarthan is noteworthy. He warns against a facile imitation of the so-called outward-oriented growth models of Japan and South Korea. Both these countries, he points out, were able to expand their exports only because—and after—they built up strong industrial capabilities based on an earlier phase of import substitution. Moreover, they did not follow a simplistic neo-classical paradigm but the Schumpeterian emphasis on "production of new goods, introducing new methods of production, creation of new markets and materials, all of which depend on non-price and non-free market variables like technological change, R and D and innovations" They also actively encouraged the emergence of large conglomerates but tackled the problem of concentration of economic power through 'management reform' which, in India's case, would

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mean transferring power from hereditary owners (ministries) in the private (public) sector to managers (enterprises). Easier said than done perhaps, but the important point being made is that instead of leaving it to the market, or interfering with the market, the state should pursue the third way of actively promoting skills, management, R and D and innovations. Chakravarty earlier had made much the same point in saying that "organization, motivation and creativity" are crucially important today when "material capital is losing out in relative terms to human capital".

At a time when politics is in such ghastly command of our consciousness, a volume like this could usefully re-direct attention to the basic bread-and-butter issues of the economy. The editors themselves have aimed at reaching a wide variety of "conscientious citizens" who are keen to understand the nature of the Indian economy and the crisis it is passing through.

The faculty of Kirorimal College are to be congratulated for enlisting the cooperation of so many leading academicians and journalists in organising the seminar and bringing out this volume. The contributions of Sukhomoy Chakravarty and Raj Krishna recall their deeply reflective involvement with India's development and how much we have lost in their being no more. At a time when politics is in such ghastly command of our consciousness, a volume like this could usefully re-direct attention to the basic bread-and-butter issues of the economy. The editors themselves have aimed at reaching a wide variety of "conscientious citizens" who are keen to understand the nature of the Indian economy and the crisis it is passing through. It is from this point of view that some critical remarks are in order about the organizational and editorial inputs that have gone into the enterprise. The organisers could have attempted a more balanced coverage of topics: there are, for instance, large gaps e.g. demography, social services, energy; for this purpose, some of the peripheral and ephemeral stuff could have been jettisoned—as it is there are too many side dishes and, in some cases, not enough dhal in the sambhar; a much better job could have been done in the introduction and summing-up to interrelate the contributions and to situate them against the larger canvas of the theme of the seminar; a select bibliography would have been very useful for students in pursuing the enquiries and debates in the contributions; and, to turn from these non-price to a price variable, the immoderate cost of the book is a damper from the point of view of its reaching the kind of readers most likely to profit from a collection of this kind. ❑

An Objective Account

Lt. Gen. A.M. Vohra

WAR AND SECESSION: PAKISTAN, INDIA & CREATION OF BANGLADESH

By Richard Sisson & Leo E. Rose

Vistaar Publications, 1990, pp 338, Rs. 225.00

On 26 March 1971, General Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan and the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) justified the military's take over of East Pakistan in an address to his "fellow countrymen", a term which already excluded East Pakistanis. He charged the leader of Awami League with treason. No West Pakistani leader or party was judged responsible either wholly or in part for the impasse. He held that "the man (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) and his party (The Awami League) are enemies of Pakistan and they want East Pakistan to breakaway completely from the country."

Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose's objective and exhaustive account of the events that led first to "a civil war, which deprived Pakistani government of legitimacy in its eastern province" and subsequently, the second–the Bangladesh war with India and various Bangladesh liberation movements, passes no judgements. It reconstructs "decisional structures and processes that characterize these two major crises as a matter of historical record." The account draws upon interviews with key political figures in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan conducted in the late 1970s.

To begin with there are observations regarding Pakistan's disjunctive political development, regionalism, political fragmentation and distrust. East Pakistan's political leaders firmly believed that powerful interests in West Pakistan had been blocking their full participation in the political and economic life of the country. Politically influential groups in the West perceived the Bengalis as latter-day Muslim converts still corrupted by Hindu practices and as secessionists in league with their co-culturists in India. The Bengalis, on the other hand, asserted that their cultural identity and lack of fluency in a "foreign" tongue (Urdu) inhibited entry into administrative and other services. In as late as 1963 only 5% of the officer corps in the Pakistan Army and 7% other ranks were Bengalis.

Abdul Mansur Ahmed, an East Pakistani, who had participated in the 1956 constitutional debates is quoted to bring out that the "two wings differ in all matters" except religion; in culture, customs, food habits "practically everything is different." It was natural therefore that the election campaign for the 1970 polls the major issue in East Pakistan should be decentralization and in Punjab there should be apprehensions of Bengali domination. Mujib's Awami League captured 160 of the total 162 seats for the Eastern Wing in the December 1970 polls for the National Assembly and became the largest party in a house of 300 with the PPP securing 82 of 138 seats allocated to the Western Wing.

The Culture of Distrust

Chapter 4 of the book recounts the developments after the elections by virtue of this culture of distrust. The Awami League (AL) and the PPP were divided by strong ideologies and personalities, were regional based and were fearful of each other, inhibiting compromise. The concensus within the military elite was to transfer power to a civilian government. The Awami League made known its intention to use its absolute majority to have a constitution based on its six points programme. Yahya Khan declared that he had no objection to the six points but counselled Mujib that the AL would have to convince the leaders of West Pakistan.

The PPP decided that it could not participate in the National Assembly without a guarantee of a share of power at the Centre. It held the AL as a regional party and maintained that the real power at the Centre rested in the Punjab and Sind. No central government, it said, could function without the cooperation of the PPP.

Then there was the question of Bhutto's personal aspirations to national prominence. He saw himself as "the rightful heir to the throne" after the Ayub regency. He confided to Yahya in one of their political discussions that he had to accede to power "now" for his family "died young". He could not wait and he would not brook any delay.

Yahya had indicated that he would not become directly involved in the constitution making process but felt compelled by early January 1971 to initiate more direct dialogue and visited Dhaka. After 3 meetings with Mujib, he referred to him as the future PM of Pakistan. Important officials were

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less than enthusiastic about the AL assuming power as they doubted Mujib's assurances. These doubts were further reinforced when Yahya was guest at Bhutto's estate in Larkana on 17/18 January 1971 when the latter registered his undisguised anger at the former having referred to Mujib as the future PM of Pakistan. Yahya said, "Mujib is a clever bastard" and would bulldoze his constitution and programmes.

At talks between the AL and the PPP at Dhaka on 27 to 30 January 1971, Bhutto accepted Mujib's six points except the issue of foreign trade and, in exchange, asked for 4 out of 10 cabinet ministers and the post of deputy PM for himself with the foreign affairs portfolio. Mujib was incensed by Bhutto's arrogance and presumptuousness.

In this milieu, Bhutto attempted to isolate Mujib and show him only as a regional leader. Although on 13 February Yahya announced that the National Assembly would be convened at Dhaka on 3 March, Mujib feared that it would, in fact not be convened as he felt that Yahya, Bhutto and the generals were in collusion. In any case, Bhutto announced that he would not go to Dhaka and later, in his speech at Lahore, on 28 February, promised to "break the legs" of any member of his party who chose to do so. He also threatened a general strike from the Kheybar to Karachi. The Government was unnerved. It felt it could control unrest in the East but unrest in the West would make it untenable. On 1 March, the President announced postponement of the convening of the National Assembly and did not give a fresh date.

Towards a Military Solution and Civil War

Admiral Ahsan, the Governor of East Pakistan, had advised the President that the reaction to a postponement would be adverse and immediate. Public order would be difficult to maintain. This is what in fact transpired. People filled the streets of Dhaka and district towns "as a demonstration of anguish rather than anger." Units of Pakistan Army were unable to control the upsurge. Political leaders in the West were taken aback by the hostility. Central authority collapsed and Martial Law Administration's writ extended no further than its headquarters.

Two chapters "Crises Bargaining" and "Constitutional Concensus and Civil War" record the events leading to General Tikka Khan's crakdown on 26 March 1971. During this entire period of dialogue from Yahya's January visit and including the final effort made by him from mid-March to resolve the impasse, the senior functionaries in East Pakistan argued against the military option. As a result, Ahsan was relieved on 28 February and Yakub Khan, who took over from him, resigned on 3 March.

Yahya had three meetings with Mujib between 16 to 19 March and they agreed to the lifting of Martial Law and the creation of two constituent committees. A draft proclamation was subsequently prepared by the presidential team and leaders of all West Pakistani political parties journeyed to Dhaka. On 22 March Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto met face to face. However, events on 23 March convinced representatives from the West, particularly the Army, that East Pakistanis were not committed to a negotiated settlement. On this day, the celebrations of what in the East was called the "Resistance Day", demanded independence and called for armed resistance. They marched in military formations with Bangladeshi flags.

The last meeting of the negotiating teams was held on 24 March at which the AL presented a final plan to the President. "Given the toughness that Mujib had displayed in their initial talks, the impotence of the central authority, and pressure from the hawkish group within the army high command, Yahya called Generals Tikka Khan and Rao Farman Ali Khan shortly after the negotiations with the Awami League began, and instructed them to finalize the drafting of operational orders for military action to reinstate public order and central authority in East Pakistan."

The objectives of "Operation Searchlight" were to neutralize the political power of the Awami League and re-establish public order. The top leadership of the Party and its radical elements had to be captured. The Bengali units of the armed forces had to be disarmed. The army was successful in most urban centres within ten days but it took the martial law authorities six weeks to gain control over the entire province. It met tough resistance from Bengali units and was unsuccessful in disarming all but a few. By April end, the military elite felt that it had controlled the crisis. In fact the civil war continued. Guerrilla activity of rebel forces became increasingly effective. While Pakistani government was able to reassert military control, it was never able to reassert administrative control outside the urban areas.

Indian Response

The chapter on India's response records that India was hopeful of a negotiated settlement. The response to the decision to suppress the AL on 25 March was cautious. However refugees were given shelter, the establishment of a government in exile was permitted and "New Delhi assumed responsibility for the arming and training of Mukti Bahini."

Pakistan took serious note of the views of K. Subrahmanyam who called the situation "an opportunity the like of which will never come again". It ignored those of other prominent Indians such as Rajaji and Cariappa who counselled against any involvement in East Pakistan.

India sought widespread international support and laid emphasis on the "duty" of the international community to bring pressure to bear on Pakistan for a political solution and the return of millions of refugees.

By mid July, the key groups around Mrs Indira Gandhi were agreed that India should resort to armed intervention in East Pakistan at an appropriate time if a satisfactory political settlement had not been achieved in the Pakistani civil war. A number of reasons are given for this course in a chapter entitled "War: India". This and the next chapter deal with the Indo-Pak War of December 1971 and the transfer of power in Pakistan to Bhutto. Some interesting points recorded in this regard are that:

- Pakistan assumed that if India intervened, international pressure would bring about a cease-fire and the latter would be placed in an awkward situation having an army of occupation on Pakistani soil.

- The influx of refugees into India was seen by Pakistan as retribution for India's meddling in Pakistan's affairs.

- There was a firm conviction in Pakistan that it was impossible for it to lose a war to India. "Such an outcome was inconceivable. The Muslims had never been defeated by the Hindus."

- "The defence of the east was in the west" a longstanding strategic assumption in Pakistan, making defence of East Pakistan possible with a minimum force.

- Pakistan's decision to declare war on 3 December derived from three considerations. First, adverse publicity in the West that it had been rendered powerless by India. Second, that incursion by India into Pak territory on 21 November had not invoked any international reaction. Third, the caustic advocacy by Bhutto who told Yahya at the end of November that if he did not react forcefully to India's outright aggression, he would be lynched by the people.

- It was clear by 7 December that the defence of East Pakistan was collapsing. On 9 December Governor Malik stressed the need to pursue a political settlement. On 14 December Yahya sent a message to Niazi to stop fighting to save further loss of lives and destruction.

- The terms of surrender were initiated by Gen (Now FM) Manekshaw on 16 December and signed by Lt Gen Niazi.

A scholarly and comprehensive account which dispels many myths about the break up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. ❑

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What a War Costs

P.R. Chari

THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE GULF WAR

By Kamran Mofid

Routledge, London and New York, pp. xxiv 177, £30.

It is dubious if national leaderships ever pause to compute the costs of war before entering into conflicts. It is even more unlikely that they would compute the economic consequences of war. No doubt the General Staff needs to estimate the probable losses of men and material to ensure their replacement during the conflict. But that would be in the nature of a planning exercise and intended to direct the mobilisation and procurement effort to sustain the military operations. Military leaderships are not known, incidentally, to be unduly concerned with computing the costs of war, and much less its economic consequences.

The direct costs of a war are fairly evident and might be arrived at by adding up the cost of weapons and equipment lost, ammunition and POL expended, gratuity liabilities to the wounded and families of the dead and so on.
The perceivable economic consequences of a war could include devastation in the war zone, property, economic and military assets destroyed, national and international debts incurred . . .

❖

Still, it needs better appreciation that a real problem obtains in making such estimations, without making the entire exercise arcane. How does one go about calculating the cost of a war? Or its economic consequences? How much does one include? And what does one exclude? The direct costs of a war are fairly evident and might be arrived at by adding up the cost of weapons and equipment lost, ammunition and POL expended, gratuity liabilities to the wounded and families of the dead and so on. The perceivable economic consequences of a war could include devastation in the war zone, property, economic and military assets destroyed, national and international debts incurred and such other losses caused by the conflict. But, there are many problems. From which date should the cost of a war be estimated? The date when conflict starts? Or, the date when large-scale movement of troops and equipment is necessitated by the imminence of conflict? And, how should the economic consequences of a war be estimated? On the basis of historical costs of the assets destroyed or their depreciated value or their replacement costs? Then there are the intangible costs of war and its economic consequences encapsulated in the phrase 'opportunity costs' which also need to be considered.

From which date should the cost of a war be estimated?
The date when conflict starts?
Or, the date when large-scale movement of troops and equipment is necessitated by the imminence of conflict?
And, how should the economic consequences of a war be estimated?
On the basis of historical costs of the assets destroyed or their depreciated value or their replacement costs?

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Kamran Mofid has attempted this daunting task for the eight-year old Iran-Iraq War. He has followed different methodologies for estimating the economic consequences of the war to Iran and to Iraq. This became necessary because Iran has published figures of its losses. Iraq has not. Thus, an official Iranian publication has stated that its economic losses during the first five years of the war added up to $309 billion. This did not include oil-revenue losses. After making linear projections for the entire period of the war and adding on such cost elements as the gift of one million tonnes of oil to Syria for closing down the Iraqi pipeline through Syria, higher insurance costs for shipping Iranian oil, reduction in refining facilities and export terminals, besides potential foreign exchange earning including, prominently, oil revenue losses, the total economic cost of the war to Iran has been worked out to $644.3 billion. The economic loss to Iraq has been estimated by adding up the cost of infrastructural damage to its oil revenue losses and GNP losses. This yielded a total of $289 billion. Adding thereto the cost factors of elements like loss of potential foreign exchange earnings, change in exportation routes to the Red Sea and Mediterranean, and the actual cost of the war, the total economic loss to Iraq has similarly been worked out to $452.6 billion.

These figures—$644.3 billion and 452.6 billion—need to be placed in some cognizable perspective. In terms of national product the war absorbed 60 per cent of Iran's GNP and 112 per cent of Iraq's GNP during the 1980-88 period. Expressed differently, the economic loss due to the war was almost thrice the oil revenues earned by Iran since 1919 and Iraq since 1931, when the two countries began to sell their oil on the international market Mofid argues that Iran's infrastructure suffered more grievously, although its economy was already in a state of chaos following the anti-monarchical revolution. For Iraq, at the crest of its development phase, the opportunity costs were greater. The author is on less certain grounds when he argues that, had Iran and Iraq agreed to peg their defence expenditure at 4.5 per cent of their respective GNPs after 1973, they could have accumulated foreign exchange reserves of $196 billion by 1986. Undoubtedly, this is a counsel of perfection. But the logic is flawed because it fails to take into account the overall security perspectives of the two national leaderships that transcend the Iran-Iraq imbroglio. There was, in the case of Iran, for instance, the aspirations of the Shah to erect a grandiose military apparatus; and, in the case of Iraq, the adversarial relationship with Israel.

Apart from Iran and Iraq the major sufferers after the war, ironically enough, are the arms suppliers, whose interests in the conflict were frankly commercial and untrammeled by any moral considerations. The author informs us that their number rose from 26 to 41 countries between the 1980-83 and 1983-86 phases of the Iran-Iraq war, which amounts to about one-fourth of the U.N. membership. Indeed, Brazil and China established themselves as prominent arms-suppliers during this period, and were, in a sense, noticed to

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be spear-heading a Third World movement to enter the highly competitive international arms trade against such entrenched arms exporters as the United States, Soviet Union, France and Britain, and a host of West and East European nations. The cessation of hostilities in the Gulf would seriously affect their arms manufacturing and trading activities, which has led them on an avid search for new markets.

Proceeding to discuss the reconstruction of the two shattered economies, Mofid holds that the planners and policy-framers now have "an unparalleled opportunity to change or formulate new policies and introduce strategies to bring about changes in the physical and socio-economic structures..." Reconstruction could, of course, include many things, and involve restoration or replacement of assets and restrengthening of the economy. The intervention of the State and massive external aid on the lines of the Marshall Plan would be necessary to supplement individual and private efforts. A "balanced mix of technologies, leading to a two-tier technology policy" is suggested, that envisages "the use of advanced techniques in heavy and large-scale industries, and the use of intermediate and traditional technology in light industries and small-scale production."

... the author deserves a cheer for exploring an area of academic enquiry where few have ventured thus far. The costs of a war and its economic consequences is an off-shoot of more generalised studies that seek to emphasize the opportunity costs entailed in military expenditure, more particularly for developing countries.

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It needs greater appreciation here that the nature of the regimes in the two countries is dictatorial and hardly likely to be receptive to popular aspirations for a better quality of life. Moreover these salubrious developments to reconstruct the economies of Iran and Iraq could only occur if there is peace and stability in the Gulf. To achieve this end the author suggests the signing of a panchsheel-type declaration by the concerned Heads of State, the undertaking of Helsinki-type confidence-building measures to defuse tensions in the area, and the establishment of an EEC-type regional cooperation agreement to bring about greater economic integration within the Gulf. An international conference to limit the transfer of arms to Gulf countries is also suggested, envisaging a Supplier's Club type of arrangement. All these suggestions are unexceptional. But recent developments in the Gulf subsequent to the Iran-Iraq war—notably Iraq's seizure of Kuwait—reveal the difficulties in pursuing ideal solutions in the mercurial milieu of Arab politics.

To sum up, the author deserves a cheer for exploring an area of academic enquiry where few have ventured thus far. The costs of a war and its economic consequences is an off-shoot of more generalised studies that seek to emphasize the opportunity costs entailed in military expenditure, more particularly for developing countries. There could, of course, be different views on what constitutes the costs and consequences of either wars or military expenditure, and what must be included and what should be excluded. But Mofid has largely succeeded in taking a balanced approach. One must cavil, however, at his penchant for repetitiveness, especially with regard to conclusions that are scattered all over this study. He might have remembered the admonition by Shakespeare that there is nothing so tedious as a twice-told tale.

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Blood and Guts on the Lower East Side

America's New Fiction of Insurgency

ROBERT SIGELE

What prose fiction *does*, we are told, comes about as a result of narrative voice, a focal character (or two or three), and a story (that may get rearranged a bit to become what E.M. Forster called "plot," but still presupposes a linear thread just like reality's). But America's new (est) avant-garde thinks otherwise.

Constance DeJong, who makes fiction, videos, librettos, and essays, explains a key objective of her work as "denying the reader the singularity of the first person, so I gave the first person singular to many people. I knew I wanted to deny 'authorship' this identity or singularity. I could hardly get from end to end in some books because of the singularity of The Author."

Authorship and narrative issue from a cultural repertoire of stock elements: fiction is more poesis than mimesis, the author more medium than originator. But the downtown New York writers I've been reading and interviewing don't stop here. Film maker, critic, and novelist Lynne Tillman changes our understanding of character just as drastically, her fiction as radical as her film about American movie star Frances Farmer's tragic collapse:

> One of the things *Committed* does is construct a voice, a fictionalized voice, for someone called Frances Farmer. And it places that voice against at least five others—law, psychiatry, politics, Hollywood, the family. By having these "voices" in juxtaposition with each other, we arrive at a way to see an individual operating within the institutions. We allow for ambiguity and contradiction. In this way *Committed* problematizes what makes an individual and what an individual might be rather than simplifying that process.

We have not an authorial voice, but the culture speaking through the personae it fabricates; we have not character, but the institutions and official languages out of which consciousness is woven.

Do we at least have a story? Sometimes. But just as likely, the books these writers produce evoke the response photographer and writer Richard Prince parried concerning *Why I Go To The Movies Alone* (Tanam Press, 1983): "it's like my uncle asked, 'Where's the beginning, middle, and end?' And I said, 'Well, you can start it on any page. It's not designed to be read that way.'" Though overstated a bit, at least for most of the fiction this group has produced, Prince's comment points to a logical principle behind plot, character, and voice that is less the classic linearity of Western fiction than the cultural force field. That field produces effects that include consciousness and fiction, but also Madonna, advertising, and Operation Desert Shield.

In other words, after trying since the eighteenth century to explain reality within the framework of an individual consciousness coming to awareness, American writers who eschew what one calls the "well-crafted fine little world of Writing-School-Writing" have opted to write the social rather than the individual. As if French theorist Louis Althusser were calling the shots, they regard the individual as a product of the ideological agencies of the culture, whether overt like the political, decisive like the economic, subtle like the educational, or finessed like the whole domain of religious and philosophical thought that underlies our so-called "common sense" about reality.

Joel Rose, who edits the crucial magazine *Between C & D*, talks about the kind of reality behind his novel, *Kill the Poor*: "That's what I see out there—people turning around and shooting each other. Just this blind violence and desperation. I feel like *that's* the times we live in, and that's what I'm trying to work out in whatever way is possible." Some of those ways stretch the reading capacities of those who stumble upon such fare after a steady diet of conventionally made realistic fiction.

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The most prolific and notorious of the group, Kathy Acker, provides a wide range of work whose difficulties are more than offset by the profound grasp she has of the often violent determinants of women's consciousness. Certainly by *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978; in 1982 by New York's Grove Press and London's Pan Books), Acker's angry early fiction had evolved into a form capable of appropriating the genre of the *bildungsroman* against the middle class values of its tradition. "Appropriation" is an apt word because much of the novel consists of Acker rewriting noteworthy works from the perspective of their silenced figures. Hence we read Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* from the perspective of Hester Prynne, the woman ruined and abandoned to ostracism by her lover-priest. The informing insight of that rewrite is Hester-Janey's outburst (my hyphenating the name alludes to the way Acker's protagonist, Janey, fuses her narrative "I" with Hester's, among many others in the novel): "at this point in *The Scarlet Letter* and in my life, politics don't disappear but take place inside my body." One so internalizes roles of power and configurations of gender that conflict and contradiction in the social sphere become the troubled stuff of consciousness.

In the novels that follow *Blood and Guts*, Acker pages through Western culture denaturalizing its forms (there's no "nature" in us not already colonized by culture), desublimating the violence and convoluted desire twined in the cultural meshwork of gender and identity, and questing for a kind of writing and selfhood that lies outside patriarchy's domain. Her willingness to confront the subtexts of popular culture, pornography, canonical high culture, and virtually any other scrap of the culture that comes her way keeps her material eminently American, despite its affinities with the insights of French post structural thought, particularly in the feminist work of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva.

Some of my students have difficulty at times with the bluntness with which Acker treats sex, abortion, violence, politics, and the variously profane. But most of them end up impressed by her capacity to correlate the paranoid turn of current social thought ("social reason is directed at the means of domination aimed at exercising social and political power"), the cultural residue of

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existentialist angst, and her distinctly postmodern transformation of the utopian. That is, rather than a voyage to the "right" destination, Eden as a place, hers is that nomadic motion and fluidity which emerges as the result of her own *Don Quixote* (1986; Grove Press and Pan Books). Rather than the classic journey at the end of which the hero finds himself integrated into society as its exemplar, she struggles to forge a new language and new community disparaging power and hierarchy and valorizing community and desire. Rather than recoiling from historical reality the protagonist understands as fallen from higher values, the classic formula of the modernist novel, Acker's heroines draw from their reading, the pain inflicted upon their bodies by the social regime, and the course run by their often contradictory or even self-defeating desires; what they create with these resources is a powerful analytical critique of the existential binds within which cultural contradictions leave us.

> *Writing politically is not the same as intervening politically; but perhaps, in democracies, to change the way individuals see both themselves as human beings and the collective set of acculturating forces, is to change the course of consensual flow. One needs to stay mindful of the full ironies of the double genitive I used when labelling this work "the fiction of insurgency," its genuinely insurgent politics immanent within the fiction rather than enacted upon the streets.*

At the end of *Don Quixote*, the heroine "awoke to the world which lay before her," finding it for the first time after disentangling herself from the worst shadows of the prison house of language. At the end of *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), the heroine thinks that "one day, maybe, there'ld be a human society in a world which is beautiful, a society which wasn't just disgust." Gifted at anatomizing the grounds for that disgust, relentless in searching for moments of an awakening world, she is also poetically convincing in evoking those moments when characters realize the difference between life woven of the nomadic and of desire and life determined by the sedentary and by order:

> He was amazed how indirect his human soul was: how there were goals of desire, objects of desire, resting places, beds, and he never sailed to these places directly. There were no straight routes, except by chance. Rather, the soul travelled in such turns and windings, snails, that a world was found, defined. The soul created out of its own desires.

Lynne Tillman's two most available books, the novel *Haunted Houses* (1986; New York's Poseidon Press) and the collection *Absence Makes the Heart* (1989; London's Serpentine Press), offer us a persuasive feminist ethnology. Haunted Houses nudges, rather than blasts as Acker does, the reader toward shifts in his or her conceptual framework for reading. The novel follows three young women coming of age in New York City, but Tillman disrupts the American fetish of private inner life by mixing up these three narratives. Rather than reading each character's narrative all the way through (as, for example, in Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives*), we encounter five triads mixing up the narratives. At times we confuse the three stories, but this is part of Tillman's design. To the extent that the three remain separate in our mind, we have encountered the details of personal and psychological history that individuate us. But to the extent that the three run together, we have engaged with the larger cultural mechanisms underlying individuality. We emerge not with the comforting sene of having known three women, but with the discomfiture of having encountered the raw and sometimes violent dynamism of the contending social forces determining their lives.

The key to the novel is that this contention takes place, most importantly, within rather than between characters. There are conflicts of the latter kind, naturally, but what distinguishes the novel is the complexity of internal strife within Emily, Jane, and Grace. Henry Fielding's Tom Jones fought out the conflict between appetites or temptations and his true inner nature; Charles Dicken's Pip fought out the collision between socially and economically defined status and moral and personal authenticity. But Tillman's characters have multiple internal voices speaking all sides of the larger cultural contradictions afflicting western society. Each figure is in a crisis bordering on paralysis, and only their constant talking to themselves—in their journals, in front of other people—enables them at novel's end to verge near understanding, though not resolution.

Resolution would be an individual utopia beyond the reach of those who live in the postmodern world Tillman perceives, one whose machinery is dedicated not to the joy of individuals but to the maintenance and development of the cultural entity as a whole. The consciousness each exhibits, then, is forever skittering between a terrifying sense of inner void and the play of wit and verve above it. Perhaps the ultimate image of this state is a children's book that Jane "loved and hated because it confused her": "There was a little girl who had a blanket. The blanket got a hole in it. She wanted to get rid of the hole so she decided to cut it out. She cut it out and the hole got bigger. She cut that out, too, and the hole got bigger. Eventually the hole disappeared but so did the blanket. The little girl cried and Jane was genuinely puzzled."

Since Jane is the novel's most crippled depressant, it is not so surprising that she would be most puzzled and uneasy over a parable like this one. To repress as a means of cutting out one's inner void removes both pain and self, and Jane achieves the least satisfactory of the "talking cures" (Tillman prefers this older term for psychoanalysis) in the novel. The reader understands what she cannot, for she is no Acker heroine working out just what patriarchal culture shoves down into the dark recesses of the female unconscious, and striving from so violent and traumatic a session to create an alternative language community and the culture that might complement it. Tillman's characters live in New York, not Acker's Klein bottle of utopia/dystopia.

So do the characters in a pair of novels by the editors of *Between C and D*, a crucial and long running outlet for this new writing that is just now ceasing to publish. For most of the 1980s, the East Village literati awaited its quarterly appearance on fanfold paper fresh from the editors' computers, and would open its ziploc bags (the same kind pushers stuffed with dope) to find out who else was stepping out in the war zone of immigrant tenements and renegade art galleries to give a different turn to narrative.

Catherine Texier's *Love Me Tender* (1987; Penguin), like her later *Panic Blood* (1990), consists of short segments that follow characters into the free fire zone of unfettered (but psychologically impaired) desire. *Love Me Tender* slipped past a marketing group at Penguin paperback that thought they had another book like Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero*—mindless music video bites of the rich and feckless—or Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*—trendy urban decor untroubled by analytical wisdom. Texier's three main protagonists are women whose paths cross just as each finds the self "only existing in the fall". (into the void). The mature Salvine, luxuriating in the fruits of her earlier gold-digging; the middle-aged Mystique, a dancer pushed out of the illustory apotheosis of youth by aging and her mother's mortality; Lulu, young, beautiful, and jolted out of her serial sensualities by pregnancy and a murder—these three conduct us through the ethnic and economic scales of city life to a grim sense of the fatally simulacral existence fostered by what its residents call The City:

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> In New York you create your own reality. You make yourself a set and costumes and you launch your life. If it doesn't work, you start all over with a different plot, a different set of characters. It's totally artificial. A man-made product. Sometimes beautiful. But unreal. It doesn't take certain things into account: like being born, death, aging, the process of living. It's a crazed merry-go-round, with bodies flying off the side when they can't hold onto the horses anymore.

The form of such consciousness, as of this novel, has more in common with the instantaneousness and simultaneities of the media than the slow linearities of traditional narrative—it's more fast image than slow-nurtured structure. Texier leaves you winded and pulsating, having derived as much of a "rush" from her work as one gets from Ellis's or McInerney's. But she has also taken you with a sure but implicit sense into the heart of what she once explained to me as the "hook" that changed her visit from France into immigration to New York:

> There's something there; whatever chemical thing that happened in coming here from Paris *exploded*. I keep digging in there. So when I walk down the street it triggers something. It made a hole in me when I first came here.

That "hole" is congruent with the one made by Joel Rose's *Kill the Poor* (1986; Atlantic Monthly Press) in the innocence most American readers have about urban life. Rose's family were among the many Jewish immigrants who filled the tenements of the Lower East Side at the turn of the century, then moved to the suburbs as they moved up the economic ladder. Rose's return, to a flat across the street from where his grandparents were married and a few doors down from his grandfather's old tailor shop, is paralleled by that of his protagonist, Jojo, who crashes and burns, existentially, crushed by social forces and cultural requirements he can't fulfill. But none of the novel's poor succeed either, and the title's meaning is just this, that only a relatively privileged childhood gives you the needed edge to cut your own slice from the American pie. Rose's quick slices and short takes move as quickly as Texier's, relentlessly capturing the detailed textures of daily life in a social sector normally as unrepresented in fiction as it is in parliaments.

These examples suggest the power but not the range of the fiction that has emerged from a decade of collective ferment in the New York arts beginning in the mid seventies. One would have to look carefully at Richard Prince's devastating anatomy of life in the simulation zone of media culture (*Why I Go To The Movies Alone*; Tanam Press, 1983), Reese Williams' moving meditation on the intersection of a death culture and a therapeutic turn (*A Pair of Eyes*; Tanam Press, 1984); Constance DeJong's crucial but out of print dissections of the cultural voice (*Modern Love* and *The Lucy Amarillo Stories*; Standard Editions, 1977 and 1978 respectively)—and even these are just a beginning.

This is a body of work that more tellingly than any other in American literary history makes explicit the ideological resonances of the objects and cultural mechanisms that fill the daily lives of Americans. It understands in ways quite consistent with French poststructural theory the affiliations between the issues of language and representation and those of politics and social order. It makes fiction part of the problem rather than a transparent window upon reality, including the literary establishment in the larger panorama of institutions and discourses that prune consciousness into the topiary of good citizenship (or, perhaps, good consumerism). It understands that there are no easy answers and no utopian zone from which to pose them: one is always working, if at all, from a privileged position that partly compromises one's voice and partly enables the interventions one would like to make.

One is thus always the double agent, turning one's privilege to speak against the conditions that excluded others. Writing politically is not the same as intervening politically; but perhaps, in democracies, to change the way individuals see both themselves as human beings and the collective set of acculturating forces, is to change the course of consensual flow. One needs to stay mindful of the full ironies of the double genitive I used when labelling this work "the fiction of insurgency," its genuinely insurgent politics immanent within the fiction rather than enacted upon the streets. But as such it represents a bold, even exciting moment in American literary history that prepares us to read and think differently about narrative, individuality, and the feel of the points at which external culture is internalized *as* the interiority we in the West, at least, often used to consider an autonomous, even imperial realm. ❑

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Quiet Questionings

Gopal Gandhi

At a reading on December 8, 1990 organized by The Poetry Society of India at India International Centre, New Delhi, two poets of sensitivity read from their recently published works. The gathering, neither small nor large, listened with a quiet that was not just "polite". It had an openness to poetry and to poetic suggestion. The audience was not disappointed. Anna Sujatha Mathai and Sudeep Sen have just appeared in paperback. Sujatha Mathai's volume *The Attic of Night* has been brought out by Rupa and Co. in its 'New Poetry' series while Sen's *The Lunar Visitations* was published in the USA last year by White Swan Books, New York.

Sujatha Mathai, who has earlier collections of poetry to her name (*Crucifixions* and *The Unreconciled*) has been known in Delhi as an accomplished actress and stage director. She read from her new book, as well as some other pieces, with the confidence of one practised in the art of recitation. Sen, who has recently returned from the USA after obtaining an MS from the Graduate School by Journalism at Columbia University, evoked, in his subdued reading style, the subject of Longfellow's poem who

> *stood with reluctant feet*
> *where brook and river meet.*

Selecting pieces from her latest work, Sujatha Mathai gave the audience a sense of the auditory quality of her work. *Poetry In the Conversation of Mankind* is the title of Oakshott's well-known book. In *The Attic of Night* poetry *is* conversation, where emotion expresses itself in the rise and fall of the poet's voice. This is so irrespective of whether in her poems she employs the procedure of dialogue. There is in many of them the tension of taut interlocution. This invests the poems with an almost dramatic value. The inverted comma punctuates her verse. It does so naturally, non-intrusively, as in a smooth-flowing narrative. The poet herself, her father, mother, grandmother, maid and others who are perhaps almost strangers, converse in these poems.

Converse. The word is derived from the Latin *conversari* meaning 'to turn about, to dwell, to keep turning'. Words in a conversation do that. Some of them move in and out. Others dwell, stirring thought and more conversation. The following excerpts illustrate how Sujatha Mathai's poems converse:

> *Families are boats where*
> *strangers cling together,*
> *saying 'You are familiar, so familiar,*
> *I've known you all my life.*
> *Hold tight, Don't let us drown.'*
>
> —Families

> *When I was seventeen*
> *And dreaming of distant lands*
> *And faraway loves,*

Gopal Gandhi has published a novel Saranam, *in 1988, subsequently re-issued under the title* Refuge *by Ravi Dayal Publishers.*

THE OLD

The old lie on our hearts
like lead. Their demands
are deadweights on our eyes.
They pull us where they are going
and we wish to go the other way.
The more deference we pay them
the more bitter our resentement.
Thank God, we do not put our Old
into Institutions and Homes. . .
there aren't any.
They can crouch in our homes
and wait for death,
surrounded by dutiful faces
of daughters and sons
and daughters-in-law.
They grow weary talking
of times when they were young.
Their words fall on deaf ears,
the monotonous chant of past events,
names of people long dead. . .

A lovely old woman once talked to me. . .
That was in another country.
She and I were alone together,
I was taking her to an Old People's Home
especially meant for the mentally ill.
We passed the Lyric Theatre
where she had once sung.
Sixteen then, and beautiful,
she had held a crowd enchanted.
'It's not right' she said, in her delicate way,
'that they should put the old girls
and the young girls
apart. People should be all together,
young and old.'
It was true, I thought, as I held her hand—
Forty years lay between us
and yet I knew what it was like
to be old,
and she remembered youth so vividly.

Age is only an attempt at measurements
on the tape of time,
milestones that read the wrong way.
When we are young, youth is
something other people
talk about,
loose change in the pocket,
in a foreign currency
to be handed over at the boundary.
When we are old,
youth is a haunting memory.
Every inch of the way we have death
beside us.
Death ignores the generation gap.

From *The Attic of Night*

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My grandmother said
'Get her married
before the light
goes out of her face'
The light on a woman's face
should not be so brief.

—Light

Angela knows about long silences
and loneliness—
she has only that nephew
who covets her nose-ring.
'Who care for me when I be old?
Who bury me when I die?'

—Coming Running Jumping

Publishers' commendatory introductions are notoriously suspect and Rupa and Co. can be no exception. This volume's blurb chimes with the chlorophyll notes of a breakfast-time advertisement : "Her poems deal with everyday reality". As the same backcover seeks somewhat ineffectively to explain, Sujatha Mathai's poems do much more than that. For one thing, they carry a strain of memory, genetic memory. Thakazhi has introduced the rest of India to its Keralan aspect. More precisely, to coastal Kerala. *Chemmeen* has done for Kerala what Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhay's *Pather Panchali* has done for rural Bengal. But a very important segment of Kerala, namely, its Syrian Christian personality has remained largely unwritten. Historical, sociological studies exist and, indeed, grow. But Indian creative writing in English has by-passed this remarkable community. Sujatha Mathai's poems are a step towards supplying that lack. They do so very non-denominationally, unself-consciously. And this role of *The Attic of Night* is to be welcomed.

At a more human, universal, level her work claims attention for its restraint. The restraint that comes from a preference for stillness as against the excesses of nervous tension; for contemplation as against the spilling of half-baked thoughts in quarter-baked words. One can see, feel, in Sujatha Mathai's poetry the presence of thought which would rather be at peace with itself rather than be at war with its readers. Conversation and expression in Sujatha Mathai's verse, like certain types of marine life, prefer to remain in the architecture of the deep. Her feelings glide into view only to retreat quickly into the warm rockery of reflection. What is said in a line or a half-line suggests the whole.

Life is a kind doctor who gives us death
in small daily doses.

—Stones

Age is only an attempt at measurements
on the tape of time,
milestones that read the wrong way.

—The Old

We have in *The Attic of Night* a book of quality; in Anna Sujatha Mathai a poet of depth, feeling, and that attribute which is so easy yet so difficult to achieve, restraint.

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SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR was, for over 20 years, professor at Tehran University. He also served as Dean and Vice Chancellor of Tehran University and Chancellor of Aryamehr University.

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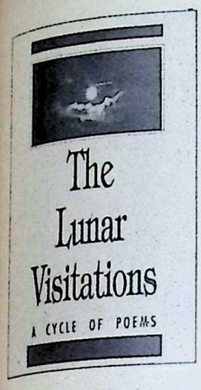

The Lunar Visitations by Sudeep Sen is a handsomely got up volume. The title verso page of bibliographical information carries a routine detail which, if printed as poetry could pass as a spoof on non-resident Indian writing:

The text of this book
Has been composed in Times Roman.
It has been printed
On acid-free 70 lb.
Hammermill offset paper.
Typesetting by Elkin Graphics,
Washington, D.C.

That detail says a great deal about the book and its author. Sen has been awhile in the West. Long enough to bring a touch of mayonnaise to the salad days of his poetic endeavour. The effect is entirely agreeable. Feelings that are wholesome, thoughts uncomplex, expressed in language that is, well, clear. Like the notes of a mouth organ. One does not expect a philharmonic range from a harmonica. But Sen can surprise one with the appeal of single notes:

A bird, one of the migratory species,
came here for a new season.
But the stranger and the bird
soon left the city to find the Truth,
while millions came here to find the same.

—A Pilgrimage to Mathura

One moonlit December night
you came knocking at my door,
I took my time to open.
When I did,
there was just a silk scarf,
frayed, half-stuck in the latch.

—One Moonlit December Night

. . .Communism and all other 'isms'
are only ideological refuges that
the tram-lines carry,
meandering in an antiquated symmetry.
"All are equal, all are free"
Changes color at Free School Street at dusk,
where the same activists and moralists
point their black umbrellas caught in their white dhotis. . .

—Calcutta Vignettes

The poems in this slim volume share an interest in the moon, whence its title. It bobs in and out of the poet's periscope—very spherical, very sharp and silvery. One would not like to go as far into blurbese as the book does in its coverflap: "In their structure and imagery, Sudeep Sen's poems posit a divine order, or at least a cosmic unity whose beauty and perfection console the mind while sharpening the senses, awakening in ironic sensibility." That sentence leaves one rather breathless and bewildered about Sen's poetic achievement. And so, stepping out of the tangled web of that praise let us see what Sen's poems actually do. (I will resist the temptation of employing current critical jargon which would have said 'let us see how Sen's poems *work*', as if poetry were a piece of plumbing!)

Sen *has* a reference point, but it is not the moon. Calcutta, in a sense, seems to be that point. Comforting and contradicting. Receiving and reprimanding. Forgiving and forbidding. But what is Calcutta? A clutch of villages Charnock knit together? Calcutta is a chiaroscuro of hopes and disappointments. It can—and does—extend beyond the banks of the Hooghly to wherever a person strays from the fixities of tradition. Magnetic and anti-magnetic waves emanate from that affiliation. Sen asks

How long will the people here recline and bask
"in thy days of glory past"
of Dutts, Derozios and Tagores?

—Calcutta Vignettes

But in the same poem, a few stanzas earlier Sen has written

sitting on one of the Strand benches
overlooking the swirling Hoogly, watching the sky
change colors, the ancient dhows casting their nets,
tasting jhaalmuree *and* chaa *and seeing the lovers*
one feels and cries, "This is it!"

Anyone who has seen Sunil Janah's brilliant black and white photographs of the Calcutta cityscape against a monsoon sky from the standpoint of a *dhow* will warm to that passage. He or she will also know what it is that makes this very young poet's work kaleidscope into a pattern.

Tradition is a full cup. But it is also a fractured cup. Can you hold and heal it at the same time? This is the question that seems to be at the base of Sen's work; the work of one who, like a sophomore on a wander in the college quadrangle, does not know whether to dodge or joust with the stubble-scratching seniors—his philosophic puzzles—who want to hassle him. Sudeep Sen is, "a poet of immense promise" as Shashi Tharoor has described him. He is also a quiet questioner. The notes on a harmonica's scale are obtained by blowing and drawing in, its reeds so arranged as to give music by this alternate direction of windflow. His faith and unfaith have alternated to create *The Lunar Visitations.* ❑

A NIGHT SHOT

A cock cried in the middle of the night,
a mistaken identity;
someone thought it was a night-raven.

The garbage had collected,
trashed in the back yard where
some stray bitches slept with cats.

A drunk tottered down the alley,
mouthing incoherence,
suddenly swooned

next to the pillar-box
post which posted someone
somewhere far from here.

A chemist was involved,
maybe the traducers
or the other man.

Everyone was tranquilized
with a programmed suddenness.
Even the birds died during their sleep.

The sun arose
next morning,
maybe that very night,

its rays struggling to clear
the debris of the night, and the
dread of the deadened nerves.

From *The Lunar Visitation*

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Joy of Living

Agatha Christie: A Profile

CHITRA NARAYANAN

In 1990, one hundred years after her birth and fourteen years after her death, Dame Agatha Christie remains a unique author whose books still continue to bring immense pleasure to her readers. This extraordinary person has through her autobiography and more so through her novels revealed herself as one who above all cared about the art of living and the complexities of human nature.

So ageless is the appeal of her writing that it is difficult to realize today that her Belgian detective Hercule Poirot emerged in 1920 in **The Mysterious Affair at Styles** and ten years later the wonderful Miss Jane Marple in **Murder at the Vicarage**. Television and film have brought her novels to the electronic media and their current popularity only proves that people are the same whatever century they live or where, and a good plot with vivid characters has eternal appeal.

Detective novels emerged as a respectable branch of literature with Edgar Allan Poe's **Murder on the Rue Morgue** (1841), Wilkie Collin's **Moonstone** (1868) and **Woman in White** (1860). Since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Watson appeared in 1887 in **A Study in Scarlet** followed by G.K. Chesterton's **The Innocence of Father Brown** (1911), detective fiction was gradually gaining popularity. Apart from Hercule Poirot's first debut in 1920, Dorothy L. Sayer's Lord Peter Wimsey (1923) and Ellery Queen, the creation of Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee (1929) also emerged on th scene. With the arrival of the paperback in 1930's this decade was the golden age of the genre. C. Day Lewis under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake, Georges Simenon, Dame Ngaio Marsh and Carter Dickson (John Dickson Carr) entered the fray, with hard boiled crime fiction writers like Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald, Mickey Spillane, Erle Stanley Gardner and Rex Stout.

Agatha Christie herself acknowledges her debt to Conan Doyle in her creation of Hercule Poirot and Hastings,

> It had escaped my notice that not only was I now tied to the detective story, I was also tied to two people: Hercule Poirot and his Watson, Captain Hastings. I quite enjoyed Captain Hastings. He was a stereotyped creation, but he and Poirot represented my idea of a detective team. I was still writing in the Sherlock Holmes tradition—eccentric detective, stooge assistant, with a Lestrade-type Scotland Yard detective, Inspector Japp—and now I added a 'human foxhound', Inspector Giraud, of the French police. Giraud despises Poirot as being old and passé.

What she did not forsee was their immediate appeal and longevity! Her deepest regret was introducing an elderly Poirot. It had not been her intention to write another detective novel after the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*. This one had been written as a result of a challenge from her sister.

> And so it was that I started on my long career; not that I suspected at the time that it was going to be a long career. In spite of the clause about the next five novels, this was to me a single and isolated experiment. I had been dared to write a detective story; I had written a detective story; it had been accepted, and was going to appear in print. There, as far as I was concerned, the matter ended. Certainly at that moment I did not envisage writing any more books, I think if I had been asked I would have said that I would probably write stories from time to time. I was the complete amateur—nothing of the professional about me. For me, writing was fun.

And so the long voyage with Poirot and Hastings began. Agatha Christie attempted to marry off Hastings in the second Poirot novel ***Murder on the Links*** claiming that she was struck with Poirot but not necessarily with Hastings but the companionship lasted right till the end in *Curtain* at styles where it all began.

Her other great detective Miss Jane Marple made her debut in *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) and St. Mary Mead with all its memorable characters came to life. In fact Miss Marple had appeared earlier in six short stories for a magazine which was later published with seven other stories as *The Thirteen Problems*. Here too Miss Marple emerged at the age of sixty-five.

> I think it is possible that Miss Marple arose from the pleasure I had taken in portraying Dr Sheppard's sister in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. She had been my favourite character in the book—an acidulated spinster, full of curiosity, knowing everything, hearing everything: the complete detective service in the home.

In the Miss Marple novels all the quirks of human nature come into full play around this gentle and ruthless heroine. One particular characteristic of the lady sleuth was borrowed from Agatha Christie's own grandmother.

> Miss Marple was not in any way a picture of my grandmother; she was far more fussy and spinsterish than my grandmother ever was. But one thing she did have in common with her—though a cheerful person, she always expected the worst of everyone and everything, and was, with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right.
>
> 'I shouldn't be surprised if so-and-so isn't going

Anyway, I settled on a Belgian detective. I allowed him slowly to grow into his part. He should have been an inspector, so that he would have a certain knowledge of crime. He would be meticulous, very tidy, I thought to myself, as I cleared away a good many untidy odds and ends in my own bedroom. A tidy little man. I could see him as a tidy little man, always arranging things, liking things in pairs, liking things square instead of round. And he should be very brainy—he should have little grey cells of the mind—that was a good phrase: I must remember that—yes, he would have little grey cells. He would have rather a grand name—one of those names that Sherlock Holmes and his family had.

From Agatha Christie's Autobiography

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on,' my grandmother used to say, nodding her head darkly, and although she had no grounds for these assertions, so-and-so was exactly what *was* going on. 'A downy fellow, that—I don't trust him,' Grannie would remark, and when later a polite young bank-clerk was found to have embezzled some money, she was not at all surprised, but merely nodded her head.

'Yes,' she said, 'I've known one or two like him.

Through the suspense and entertainment of both Poirot and Miss Marple novels runs a common kind of passion.

—that passion being to help save innocence. Because it is *innocence* that matters, not *guilt*.

I can suspect judgement on those who kill—but I think they are evil for the community; they bring in nothing except hate and take from it all they can. I am willing to believe that they are made that way, that they are born with a disability, for which, perhaps, one should pity them; but even then, I think, not spare them—because you cannot spare them any more than you could spare the man who staggers out from a plague-stricken village in the Middle Ages to mix with innocent and healthy children in a nearby village. The *innocent* must be protected; they must be able to live at peace and charity with their neighbours.

Both serve the cause of justice and have no excuse for wickedness. Miss Marple in fact describes herself as Nemesis in **The Carribean Mystery** and the connected novel **Nemesis**.

After the success of **The Mysterious Affairs** at Styles Agatha Christie wrote a light hearted spy story and thriller **The Secret Adversary** introducing Tommy and Tuppence as the young adventurers. I have always suspected that there is much of the author reflected in the character of Tuppence. The last Tommy and Tuppence novel, **Postern of Fate**, written in 1976 (her last book) contains much from her own childhood memories. Tommy and Tuppence appear together also in **N or M., Partners in Crime** and **By the Pricking of my Thumbs. The Secret Adversary** bears the dedication:

To all those who led monotonous lives in the hope that they may experience at second-hand the delights and dangers of adventure.

Agatha Christie's own spirited attitude towards living and yearning for adventure comes through in her other thrillers, **Man in a Brown Suit, They came to Baghdad, Passenger to Frankfurt, Why Didn't They Ask Evans, The Secret of Chimneys and The Seven Dials Mystery.** Even more it comes through in her collection of short stories, **Parker Pyne Investigates.** These gems are the most entertaining portrayal of peoples' longing for romance and adventure, and the ultimate fantasy that it can be arranged. If only Parker Pyne did exist!

Closely linked but with a more sombre theme are her short stories featuring Mr. Harley Quin and his emissary Mr. Satterthwaite.

> "The psychology of character is interesting," returned Poirot, unmoved. "One cannot be interested in crime without being interested in psychology. It is not the mere act of killing, it is what lies *behind* it that appeals to the expert. You follow me, Hastings?"
>
> I said that I followed him perfectly.
>
> "I have noticed that when we work on a case together, you are always urging me on to physical action, Hastings. You wish me to measure footprints, to analyse cigarette ash, to prostrate myself on my stomach for the examination of detail. You never realise that by lying back in an arm-chair with the eyes closed one can come nearer to the solution of any problem. One sees then with the eyes of the mind."
>
> "I don't," I said. "When I lie back in an arm-chair with my eyes closed one thing happens to me and one thing only!"
>
> "I have noticed it!" said Poirot. "It is strange. At such moments the brain should be working feverishly, not sinking into sluggish repose. The mental activity, it is so interesting, so stimulating! The employment of the little grey cells is a mental pleasure. They and they only can be trusted to lead one through fog to the truth. . . ."
>
> I am afraid that I have got into the habit of averting my attention whenever Poirot mentions his little grey cells. I have heard it all so often before.
>
> From *Lord Edgware Dies* by Agatha Christie

Three times before he had met Mr. Quin, and each time the meeting had resulted in something a little out of the ordinary. A strange person, this Mr. Quin, with a knack of showing you the things you had known all along in a totally different light.

At once Mr. Satterthwaite felt excited—pleasurably excited. His role was that of the looker on, and he knew it but sometimes, when in the company of Mr. Quin, he had the illusion of being an actor—and the principal actor at that.

Mr. Quin, the friend of lovers is the catalyst and somehow always connected with death. Agatha Christie acknowledges that these two characters are her favourites.

A detective novelist, spy story and thriller writer, Agatha Christie was also a successful playwright. Her first play **Black Coffee** was a moderate success, *Alibi* was adapted from her first best seller **The Murder of Roger Ackroyd** and **The Hollow** adapted from the book of the same name. At the request of Queen Mary, B.B.C. asked her for a short radio play and **Three Blind Mice** was written for the occasion. Later she rewrote it as a play which became **The Mousetrap** and created theatrical history running for over twenty-one years to packed houses. She attributed the phenomenal success of **The Mousetrap** to mainly luck, its humour and thriller appeal. However her own favourite play was **Witness for the Prosecution** which is now a film classic.

Agatha Christie may have lightheartedly entered her books through her various heroines and characters like Ariadne Oliver but she never gave so much of herself as she did in her six novels written under the name of Mary Westmacott. When she first wrote **The Mysterious Affair at Styles** she chose the pseudonym Martin West, but her publisher insisted on Agatha Christie. Mary Westmacott gave her total anonymity for fifteen years after the first novel under this name **Giant's Bread** was published in 1930. It is a great injustice to the author that her novels under this name are described as "romantic" novels. Indeed all six are about love but love in all its manifestations, terrible and divine. **Giant's Bread** is the complex story of a composer and his passion for the genius that owns him and the two women in his life. **The Burden** explores the complex maternal love of an elder sister for her younger sister and the tragedy of possessive unselfish devotion; a similar theme is found in **A Daughter's a Daughter. The Rose and the Yew Tree** is a great novel about the powerful and complex attraction of opposites.

But it is *Absent in the Spring* that leaves you shattered with its searing insight into the human heart and mind uneasily striking a responsive chord in the reader. It is an unusual story of an ordinary woman stranded in the desert for four days. There she is forced to meet herself for the first time in her life. Agatha Christie says this was the one book that satisfied her completely. Written in three days, it had been growing in her for several years. "It was written with integrity, with sincerity, it was written as I meant to write it and that is the proudest joy an author can have".

Unfinished Portrait was the second of the Mary Westmacott novels written in 1934. In essence it is a daughter's homage to her mother—a mother of such unusual and vivid personality that I could not believe such a person could exist, till I read Agatha Christie's **Autobiography.**

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Unfinished Portrait is the story of Celia, who is prevented from committing suicide by a stranger. As she unravels her life we share her unusually happy childhood, the loving bond between mother and daughter, the happy marriage of Celia and its sudden devastating end closely linked with the death of her mother. It is no wonder that Agatha Christie insisted her autobiography be published posthumously. With a sense of shock you realize Celia's story is that of the author's and so faithful is the account in reality and fiction that it is forgivable to presume that what happened to Celia could be the missing link in Agatha Christie's own life in the celebrated disappearance after her divorce from Archibald Christie in 1928. Written probably to purge the demons it is still a moving novel lovingly written.

▼

... this is the essence of Agatha Christie and her books; the tremendous zest for life with all its challenges, in discovering people with all their quirks and her genius translates this zest into fiction and shares with us, her readers for a short time a bit of her joy of living.

▲

In 1975 in her *Autobiography* she wrote about her novels:

> One wonders where these things come from—I mean the ones that are a must. Sometimes I think that is the moment one feels nearest to God, because you have been allowed to feel a little of the joy of pure creation. You have been able to make something that is not yourself. You know a kinship with the Almighty, as you might on a seventh day, when you see that what you have made is good.

Agatha Christie found happiness in her family and in her marriage to her second husband, Sir Max Mallowan the archaeologist—above all she found happiness in writing and her only note of self pity is about the day when she will be unable to write anymore.

And this is the essence of Agatha Christie and her books; the tremendous zest for life with all its challenges, in discovering people with all their quirks and her genius translates this zest into fiction and shares with us, her readers for a short time a bit of her joy of living.

> I like living. I have sometimes been wildly despairing, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing. ❑

A Kraal to Crawl Into. . .

P.G. SUNDARARAJAN

AATHUKKU POGANUM—A TAMIL NOVEL

By *Kaaveri* (Lakshmi Kannan)

Kavya, Indra Nagar, Bangalore, pp. 160, Rs. 25.00

> "I'm going home."
> "I want to go home."
> As the author explains—it's a barrack to burrow in.
> A kraal to crawl into.
> A cove that covers, a shingle that shields, a shell, or maybe a lair to return to. . .
> A state of mind, perhaps. In the novel *Going Home*, the term 'home' or 'house' moves beyond the physical solidity of a structure to spread through the novel pervasively as a large, ruling metaphor. It influences the lives of its characters in different ways.

"I want to go home." This was the refrain with which, Gayatri as a child, often interrupted her games with her playmates. Home to her, meant *Retreat* maintained by her grandfather where, her grandmother ruled with a benign eye on the other ladies of the house. The nostalgic memories of her childhood days there often haunt her in later years as she feels cramped in a tiny structure called a 'flat' in Delhi. As a working women married to a Government Official, Gayatri has to make do with that residence until she can own a home of her own in the developing area of the capital. Contrasting the freedom with which she moved about in The *Retreat* with the hemmed-in atmosphere of her present abode, Gayatri feels that she, her husband and their son are like three mice in a mouse-trap. To own a house of their own they have to make all kinds of sacrifices and the very idea of the expense involved, daunts them as they calculate the cost.

Gayatri could not have any claim over any part of the *Retreat* since she is the daughter of the daughter of the owner, her grandfather. In spite of the Hindu Succession Act, Section 16, she has been deprived of any share in the property and this fact is brought home to her in clear terms by her mother who writes to her in detail and wants her not to brood over the loss any more. The work load for Gayatri is such that she has to read this letter in instalments during her day in her office. But the charms of the *Retreat* cannot be forgotten so easily. Numerous instances of her life in that house which was really a retreat come rushing back to her as she wrestles with the idea of getting a home of her own. The cool comfort of the house in Mysore where her grandfather sat waiting for her to return from her games, her excited narration of the happenings of the evenings while playing; all these memories come floating back underlining the importance of a home. Now in her pursuit of a home of her own, her only solace is her friend Rama, a writer whose creative talents she admires. Gayatri is very keen that Rama should not lose her art in the rat race prevailing in the capital where bogus writers abound. Yet, Rama herself feels cramped in the flat where she lives. She regrets that she does not have even a corner of her own let alone a room to sit and think. Nor does she have a table of her own to write on. This motif of a home runs through the entire novel *Aathukku Poganum* as the author portrays the travails of a group of working women whose lives are intertwined. As Rama holds forth on the realities of the peculiar situation in which they find themselves with the sole aim of survival and asserts that they have to confine themselves within the constraints of society, home and the like, Gayatri is quick to react to the term 'home'. Even if it is a home it is a container and they seek to break out of it and attain freedom. And what kind of freedom? From the ordinariness which ties them down, from the cage which is the body. In the novel, Gayatri, the narrator, broods:

> "A house. A receptacle that receives us. A chrysalis that contains. It could be a house, or it could be the body that houses our being. It absorbs the vibrations of our mind and heart. Seeking freedom, we struggle against the fetters and then we partially fail, only to grudgingly return to the shell of our body like disappointed tenants." One seeks to grow bigger than one's own body, home, even one's fate.
> Rama also asserts, that a home is what a woman makes. It never happens to come out of the blue. Even after she succeeds in making a home, it often becomes a resting place for the husband and the children. The social set up is such, she declares.

The story is narrated in the first person by the Gayatri, who however refers to herself in the third person, whenever her childhood memory takes over. The author makes use of the stream of consciousness technique with telling effect to stress the idea of a home for oneself. Though the legal aspects of a woman's succession to property is the basis of the plot, it is more or less incidental. Kaaveri finds more use for the thoughts of a woman writer who, in addition to being deprived of a place to work feels victimised by interested persons who cavil at her success. There are very few incidents in the story except one or two parties which serve to bring into focus the nature of the writer's world in the capital. The entire narration hinges upon Gayatri's efforts to make a house of her own deprived as her mother is of a proper share of the ancestral property.

The delineation of Rama's character is handled

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with the delicacy required to pin-point her sensitive approach in her own profession as a writer. Some of the characters like Damodaran who appear in absentia are handled with a dexterity, suited to the delicate situations. The hostility of her in-laws are shown in sharp relief against Rama's own self-effacing endeavour to please them.

Recalling the younger days when she had an opportunity of looking at a sandalwood tree in a friend's house, Gayatri realises, like that tree, Rama's fragrance is felt only when one gets near her. Both look ordinary from a distance.

How often she had walked on this very street, taking in the tree with indifference along with the rest of the garden. Now the tree stood naked before her, looking as common as any other unprepossessing tree—light, yellowish-brown, rough trunk, some curving branches with the usual green leaves. That's all. Overcome by a sharp pang of disappointment, Gayatri moved closer and sniffed at the tree. Why, she could smell nothing at all!

"Gayatri, look here," said Promila, ripping off a strip of the bark from the tree. Breaking the bark in two, she held it near Gayatri's nostrils. Promila then took a sharp-edged stone and stabbed the raw portion of the trunk.

"Now smell this," she said. Gayatri brought her face close and smelt the trunk.

"hm...Haa...Hmm..." she exclaimed, smelling the odorous portion of the raw trunk, her eyes tightly closed in concentration. The heady fragrance of sandalwood spread pervasively through her body in a sweet madness and behind her closed eyes they appeared one by one—the images of exquisitely carved sandalwood figurines/icons of Ganesh...Lakshmi...Saraswati...Rajeswari... Sri Krishna...Figurines carefully wrapped in the soft folds of pure silk. *Don't smell them child, it's wrong, for they're gods!* Gayatri furtively sniffing at the fragrant icons, the scent like a secret, stealing back to her surreptitiously, enveloping her in a balmy aroma.

Redolent Rama. To sense your essence, one needs close proximity. And sensitivity. And the brains. Your own parents, your husband, and your parents-in-law, they lack the olfactory cells.

In truth, it takes an ancient saint like Avvayyar, doesn't it, to recognize a Murugan concealed within the figure of a most 'ordinary' little boy?"

Nor could Gayatri forget the treatment meted out to Rama, even when she is worshipping the cosmic dancer in the Chidambaram Temple. In the ecstasy felt in glimpsing the infinite nature of Agni represented by the hundreds of lamps in the temple, Rama's predicament haunts Gayatri. Choked by the thought for a while, Gayatri succeeds in lessening her tension and drinks in the boundless beauty of the sight along with her grief.

"At the temple of Nataraja in Chidambaram, it was a blazing, resplendent *aradhana*. The priest held a nine-tiered brass lamp, ablaze with scores of flames at the tip of each of the oil-soaked wicks in the flowerets. A peal of temple bells rushed into the ears, piercing through the light of the lamps. The light leaped on to the darkest nooks and corners of the *mandap* of the Thousand Pillars. The flawless rendering of the *slokas* vied with the orchestration of the chiming bells in the charmed circle of luminous lights.

Agni, as fire, how many, just how many forms can you take? On this enormous nine-tiered lamp, and on the tip of each of these wicks, your flame stands so graceful and dignified. And on a pyre, you envelop the dead body in your orange folds, lick it clean and free the soul of its mortal coils to mingle with the elements. But at times *agni*, without any hesitation, the long tongues of your flame burn and scorch the brides in the north who do not bring enough dowry. And in the south where they are too tame to burn their brides, your fire hides in the tongues of in-laws, to singe the brides who bring a meagre dowry.

Brides who are burnt and brides who are not. The first offered in their death a neat end to their fate. And the second tossed over the fire in perpetual torture, not allowed to die. *Agni*, if you must smoulder and burn, why don't you set fire to the whole erring society? Why don't you drive away the darkness from the murky dungeon of the heart, from the gloomy abyss of an eclipsed consciousness, why don't you radiate light into the dull corners of mind till the conscience flares?"

Joshi concurs with the estimate and declares that it is the strength of Rama who, in the midst of a storm around her can bring a detachment to bear on her creative effort. Attention is drawn to other reviews which, while making the same point deal with the life-like characters of the two men in the novel. Sheela feels compelled to indicate that other reviewers have suggested Rama's close association with such characters in her personal life. Rama is visibly upset. She points to the meanness which is often visible in the media. She says that only in the case of woman writers their real life is equated to the incidents in their work. It is never admitted that they too have a solid, detached view of life which they can bring into play in their creations. Sheela breaks in irritated. She accuses that in the case of men writers such incidents are attributed to their sensitive assessment of people. If it is a woman writer they would say that it is part of her life. Rajgopal suggests ignoring the reviewers who drag in private lives into their writings.

Rama confesses that in *Driftwood*, unlike in her other stories, she has unknowingly allowed herself to be carried along directions she had not intended to traverse. Shankar objects to her apologetic tone and adds that it is because she values emotions that her writings vibrate with life. When Rajagopal suggests that it is time writers dropped the unnecessary detachment and looked for the involvement that really matters, Dorai interrupts to say that one should at least consider the tribe of critics and write with some caution. Usha suggests that to many working women Rama's writings read like their own autobiographies.

Unable to continue her diary with any meaningful words Gayatri locks it up and remembers Rama's words. Answering a question as to why she writes, Rama says:

> "You ask me why I write? You know, sometimes there are these intervals, a period of lull with vacuous, blank spaces, filled with a nothingness that opens its hollow mouth wide with an echoing sound of *Haooah*! Then I feel like filling that void with something, so I write,"

Gayatri realises that while Rama's pen leads her somewhere untiringly, her own pen even in writing a diary refuses to move, offering lame excuses. She finds her encounter with the diary a futile exercise.

In the concluding page, as Gayatri returns after a visit to Rama, Arvind has a vociferous *complaint*. Siddharth, his son, resenting the absence of the grandmother, has refused to eat and has harrassed the young parents. Gayatri sees him lying on his stomach amid the scattered toys. The boy refuses to respond to her pleadings. To Gayatri's query he retorts that his parents do not know how to play with the building blocks. To Gayatri's suggestion that they build a house, Siddharth responds with enthusiasm and both get busy with the blocks. To Shankar who is surprised at Gayatri playing with the child even without changing her dress, Siddharth exclaims that he has built a house and that granny is building a cottage. While the game of building is in progress, Gayatri's mind goes back again to the days in the *Retreat*. She remembers dragging her grandfather to her cardboard house she had built on the lawns. To Arvind's suggestion to have their meal Gayatri feels whether it is necessary to change the dress or divest oneself of all the clinging desires and run away from the suffocating house with resembles the corporal body. She feels like running away from it all.

The style employed by Kaaveri in making Gayatri narrate the story and also make her interpret the words and actions of the characters is well-suited to the psychological innuendos she hints at in exposing their motivations. The symbolism of a home carried throughout the novel and the ultimate comparison with the body which is itself another kind of home mark the psychoanalytical approach the author has taken up in writing this novel. The semantic weaving displayed in embroidering the thoughts of Gayatri and Rama is brilliant and stands out as a bold colourful strand in the warp and weft of the plot. The poignant yearning of Gayatri both as a child and as housewife and later as grandmother gains in intensity against the background of nostalgic recollections. The compact structure of the plot lends a credible literary air. ❑

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Endorsing World Bank Perspectives

M.N. Buch

HOUSING AND URBANISATION

By Cedric Pugh

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 315 Rs. 250.00

The blurb which prefaces Dr. Cedric Pugh's book entitled *Housing and Urbanisation—a Study of India* states that this work would serve as a text book for housing in India. *The Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* defines text book as under: "A book containing the leading principles of a subject". The review of the book, therefore, would naturally dwell at some length on whether the book fulfills this objective.

One of the major errors from which all works on urban affairs, urbanisation and housing in India suffer is in completely ignoring the status of land and the policy relating to land-use enshrined in laws relating to land revenue and management. All Land Revenue and Tenancy Acts and Land Revenue Codes throughout the country begin with the premise that land belongs tc the State. This is as true of the Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code, 1959, as it is of the Kanoon Mal Gwalior of Samvat 1983, corresponding to A.D. 1926. The right of the State over all land is not restricted to rural or agricultural land, but is equally applicable to urban land also. It is from the State that land is held, even on free-hold rights, and the State, therefore, has legal authority to bring all land within the net of land revenue. It is the State which vests rights in land and, therefore, it is the State which exercises the right of eminent domain through land acquisition. Even the largest metropolises in India, including Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras, fall within the ambit of the Land Revenue Code applicable to the State in question.

Land is divided into four categories for the purpose of survey and settlement, agricultural and non-agricultural, urban and non-urban. In the case of non-urban land the relevant Land Revenue Code prescribes that an *abadi* site, or house site, will be made available free of premium and land revenue to every cultivator, agricultural labourer and village artisan or craftsman for construction of a residential building. The Collector of the District has the authority to acquire land for this purpose if it is found that the area of the village *abadi* is inadequate to provide a house site to every entitled villager. This, in short, is the housing policy of government in rural areas almost from times immemorial. Access to a housing site free of cost is mandated by laws and the State is duty bound to provide such a site. Various programmes of house sites for the landless under the 20-point programme, village housing programmes, etc., have only reinforced this position. Dr. Pugh's book, by completely ignoring this aspect of housing policy, has virtually left uncovered three-fourths of the population of this country. This is a major infirmity, because even in the urban sector government have eventually moved towards the rural situation in which at least those below the poverty line have been provided house sites almost free of cost in many of our urban centres. In many States squatter settlements have been regularised and ownership rights given under a policy closely approximating to that prevailing in rural areas. The numbers involved are quite large and, therefore, ignoring this aspect of policy relating to land for housing makes the study incomplete.

One of the major errors from which all works on urban affairs, urbanisation and housing in India suffer is in completely ignoring the status of land and the policy relating to land-use enshrined in laws relating to land revenue and management.

The book under review is divided into two parts, the first dealing with theory and the second dealing with application of theory to policy formulation and programmes of housing in four metropolitan centres. The theoretical part of the book starts with a reference to the beginning of a new housing policy, largely influenced by the World Bank. The basic components of this policy are affordability, cost recovery and replicability. Dr. Pugh represents this as a World Bank inspired concept which has begun to have an impact on national housing policy in India. Long before the World Bank came on the scene the first Master Plan of Delhi had the following to state about the proposed housing programme:-

"The housing programme thus suggested is expected to meet the requirements of roughly 80 per cent of those earning less than Rs. 250/- per month, which is the minimum at which a family can obtain minimal accommodation at the prevailing market rates.... Evidently, the housing programme catering for low income groups has to be less ambitious in terms of space...."

(Master Plan for Delhi, Volume I, page 171).

Nowhere does the Master Plan state that low income group beneficiaries would get housing free of cost, which really means that even as early as 1961, when the Master Plan was prepared, affordability and cost recovery were built into the system.

The World Bank concept of affordability is really moving away from built housing to sites and services. This, again, is not a new concept because the Delhi Development Authority, as originally envisaged, was only a land development agency whose main job was to make available adequate land to all categories of people, including the very poor. The entire squatter resettlement programme of DDA was aimed at providing serviced sites to squatters and slum dwellers. Even this is by no means the pioneering effort in this country. Under Revenue Book Circulars IV-I and IV-3 in the State of Madhya Pradesh, which go back to the first nazul settlements made by the British in the erstwhile province of C.P. and Berar, the Collector of the District was and is empowered to make available house sites to the poor in urban areas. The premium and ground rent chargeable for such house sites is nominal and well within the level of affordability of the poor. The point is laboured not because squatting has thereby been avoided or adequate house sites provided for the poor, but because Dr. Pugh's work does not even take cognizance of these elements of urban land and housing policy which have been in existence in India well before the World Bank became interested in issues relating to urbanisation.

Not being aware of the basic guidelines covering house sites in India, Dr. Pugh goes on to write

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at length on the World Bank thesis, theories initiated by marxists, neo-marxists and economists and social scientists such as Harrod-Domar, Myrdal, Streeton, Abrams, Burns, Frankenhoff, Turner, Burgess and Apps. None of these learned scholars have really come up with anything radically new in terms of housing policy. For example, John Turner has postulated that it is security of land tenure and self-help which give the greatest impetus to housing. The permanent lease, whether of the Delhi pattern or of that which prevails in Madhya Pradesh under the urban survey and settlement, the regularisation of encroachment on pattas, as has been done in Hyderabad, the sites and services programmes are all aimed at providing security of tenure. In a country where, as Dr. Pugh himself acknowledges, about half the population lives below the poverty line, self-help construction is about the only method by which shelter is built. A discussion of the various theories which western economists have put forth does not, however, resolve the question basic to housing in India. The question can be worded somewhat as under:

> "Urbanisation is a reality and a substantial percentage of the growth of urban centres is accounted for by migration of the rural poor. The level of affordability of these migrants is almost zero. Therefore, they squat on any open piece of land and built rudimentary shelter for themselves. Many squat on footpaths and public rights of way. What policy formulation can give these people access to land for housing and make available to them the funds necessary to build a structure which goes at least a little beyond rudimentary shelter?"

This is what Dr. Pugh has to say on the subject. "The formal sector has economic superiority as compared with the informal sector, ... The housing conditions in the slums and squatter settlements are conspicuous reflections of these institutional inequalities. Once housing is seen as production, with insights into the housing inequality, then housing reform is seen in a broader way. Slum upgrading and site and services provisions can be, at best, only a part of the solution. The wider solutions lie in economic development. . . ." This is tantamount to saying that if the country becomes affluent enough it will not have a housing problem. The fact is that India is not affluent enough, it will not be so for a long time to come and, therefore, we shall face a housing problem. Nothing that Dr. Pugh says helps us in finding a solution to the housing problem under the prevailing circumstances and state of the economy. If that be so, of what value is the book?

A reading of the book does not suggest the level of readership to whom Dr. Pugh is addressing himself. Is it under-graduate students? In that case to throw names at them, as has been done in part I of the book, makes no sense, because unless the context in which the named economists have worked is made clear, the theories would lead only to confusion. If, however, Dr. Pugh assumes a certain level of knowledge amongst his readers, then the book is, in parts, almost ridiculously simplistic. For example, inp. 66 Dr. Pugh states "A consumption goods is one from which a person obtains immediate enjoyment or satisfaction." In p. 47 he states "The term political economy enjoins economics and politics". Elsewhere he states "India is in the process of transformation—from less developed to newly industrialised." These are the types of cliches which detract from the merit of this book.

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Dr. Pugh's work, in so far as the theoretical portion is concerned, is a rehash of bits and pieces of theories put forward by some western economists, without in any way suggesting how they are appropriate to Indian conditions or leading to the formulation of a thesis relevant to this country. The four metropolitan studies are only the putting together of odd bits of data from here and there and views expressed in World Bank reports and articles written by some Indian planners and academicians.

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Having disposed of the theory of housing and urbanisation by referring to a number of western economists, but without evolving any hypothesis which could really be applicable to Indian conditions, Dr. Pugh goes on to talk of the new national housing policy and then to review the situation in Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Dr. Pugh's book was published in 1990. It refers to the national housing policy, a paper relating to which was prepared by the Ministry of Urban Development in 1989-90. The book, however, makes no reference at all to the Report of the National Commission on Urbanisation submitted in August, 1988, which has dealt very extensively with housing, land, urban planning policy, housing finance and the gamut of laws which relate to urban planning and housing. Was Dr. Pugh unaware of this report or did he deliberately ignore it? The report itself has heavily influenced the national housing policy paper, has led the Ministry of Urban Development to review the laws which affect urban development and housing and has contributed to the setting up of the National Housing Bank. A book which ignores this report, therefore, automatically loses in value, especially as a text book.

So far as the four metropolises referred to by Dr. Pugh are concerned, unfortunately the author has merely picked up material put out by the development authorities in question and some of their critics. Much of what Dr. Pugh has said has been read by us in any number of newspaper articles. From the writings of Dutta, Mishra and Shafi Dr. Pugh has concluded that DDA has failed in achieving its social and economic goals, has inflated land prices and has not succeeded in implementing the Master Plan. Whether the critics are wholly objective or have credibility is not conclusively proved by Dr. Pugh and, therefore, his remarks on how DDA has operated have tended to be subjective.

On Calcutta, however, Dr. Pugh is much less critical probably because, unlike Delhi, Calcutta receives substantial World Bank assistance, of which Dr. Pugh wholly approves. Even the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority acknowledges that the basti improvement programme, whilst useful in improving the quality of life to a certain extent, has not been without its drawbacks because it has failed to confer ownership rights and has also not led to any improvement in the economic condition of people. The review of the Calcutta programme done by the author is very sketchy indeed. The same remarks apply to the Madras study. Dr. Pugh approves of the work done there because it is one more step in the experiment tried out by the World Bank. Bombay is also considered a part of the same fabric, with Dr. Pugh approving of World Bank intervention in this behalf.

Dr. Pugh's work, in so far as the theoretical portion is concerned, is a rehash of bits and pieces of theories put forward by some western economists, without in any way suggesting how they are appropriate to Indian conditions or leading to the formulation of a thesis relevant to this country. The four metropolitan studies are only the putting together of odd bits of data from here and there and views expressed in World Bank reports and articles written by some Indian planners and academicians. Unfortunately these do not constitute even an anthology because the authors selected do not represent a cross-section of urbanologists in India. Far from being a text book, Dr. Pugh's work can at best be a justification to the authorities of the institution at which he teaches and which must undoubtedly have paid for his Indian sojourn that he did not entirely waste his time here. ❑

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A Commentary on the Times

Shubra Mazumdar

THE CITY AND THE RIVER

By Arun Joshi

Vision Books, 1990, pp. 264, Rs. 150.00

A fiction writer's most handy tools are the presence of a sharp observation, an unflinching candour with which these observations are analysed and utilised and an intelligent wit, with which it generates interest and curiosity in the readers' minds. Arun Joshi's latest novel, *The City and the River*, published by Vision Books, in a hard-cover edition, exudes charm on all these accounts. Written in a parable form, it is a commentary on the times, unfolding its story in the city by the river which is governed by the Grand Master, a benevolent patriarchal figure.

Things move smoothly in this earthly Eden, except for a strange prophecy made by the Astrologer. The learned man predicts the crowning of a king in place of the Grand Master. This strange prophecy which challenges the authority of the Grand Master comes to pass on the day of the Festival of the River, when the son of the Grand Master is offered a crown and the ritual coronation is accomplished. In the end, a deluge of rain destroys the city by the river with the great river flowing over the ruins in silent unconcern. The all-pervading power of the river over the petty doings of a single lifetime, becomes obvious in the ultimate victory of the river over the city's existence.

The events in the story contain the life and activities of the people who work out their daily routine on the banks of the river. In this way, the river has both a physical and a symbolic association with the people. In actual terms, the river populace, namely the boat people as they are called, are the main opposition group to the power and authority of the Grand Master. They stubbornly insist on offering allegiance to the river alone, and remain unshaken from their native sanguinity. Later, in the story, the mystic river washes way the intrigues and turmoil of the preceding years and flows over the submerged ruins, in misty placidity, making the reader acutely aware of the temerity of Man in the face of nature. "In any case, we are only instruments—both you and I—of the Great God in the highest heaven who is the Master of the Universe. How perfect we are as instruments is all that matters. His is the will, His is the force." The river thus becomes a source of ultimate realisation and the symbolic anchor of man's tranquility. But the book is not a philosophical tract mouthing the utterances of its characters. Its appeal lies in its skillful handling of the course plotted by the path of intrigue and corruption in high places. The Grand Master is surrounded by a coterie of fawning councillors, whose sole aim in life is to remain in the limelight and improve their hierarchical standing in the administrative ranking system. The kingpins in this strategy are the principal trio of the Police Commissioner, the Education Adviser, and the Master of Rallies. Their workings are brought into sharp focus through the mysterious disappearance of the teacher, Master Bhumiputra or Bhoma and whom his professor sets out to rescue and return, to the safety of his family. The unwary professor on this humanist quest, is witness to the sordid underhandedness of the administrative machinery that the Grand Master oversees. On the whole, the Master is a bumbling, good-natured fellow, who governs without unpleasant impositions and believes in exemplary mildness as the solution to nitty-gritty state problems. The all-knowing Astrologer keeps the kingdom in his grip.

"The Grand Master likes his people, but, at times, he is not certain. Ever so often, it seems to him, the people lose faith in him, become unreasonable, turn mutinous. At such times, the Astrologer and he confer—for days and nights on end—and put together a few formulae that might win back their allegiance. In the past their efforts have always succeeded but with the passage of time, it has become difficult to discover new formulae and the populace has begun to appear more and more unruly in the Grand Master's eyes."

The readability of the book is enhanced by Joshi's incisive character details. Each of the main actors becomes a portrait in a gallery as the events unfold. The well-meaning Master, the absent minded teacher, the unworldly professor, the machinations of the Education Advisor in league with his vagrant son and heir, and the insidious social climber, the low-born Master of Rallies, are like art works designed on the writer's palette. The easy flowing prose, tinged with quiet humour, links the story with a unique charm that only a well written period novel can evince. The events of the story are singularly free of sudden and unexpected developments and their movement seems to follow the motions of a flowing river, gushing to a speedy torrent and then ending in a sluggish delta of pragmatic evaluation. The printing and binding of the book are of high quality and so is its price. One only hopes that the publishers have a paper-back edition on the stands soon. Besides, this little read author, whose works definitely deserves greater dissemination, is bound to prove popular among the ever growing readership of Indians writing in English. ❑

Shubra Mazumdar is a freelance writer.

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A PLEASANT OFFERING OF HORS D'OEUVRES

Narayani Gupta

THE FRENCH IN INDIA : FROM DIAMOND TRADERS TO SANSKRIT SCHOLARS

Edited by Bose Vincent

Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1990, pp. 165, Rs. 150.00

From 1985 to 1990 a great deal of energy and money was spent in giving the people of India and France a taste (literally, with samosas and bhelpuri at the Trocadero mela) of each other's cultures. It is difficult to be sure whether the results were proportionate to the expenditure. At least in the case of one of the exhibitions prepared for France, we can say that it would have been far more useful for Indians to have had an opportunity to see it, instead of crating up the panels and forgetting about them once they were sent back from France. As for the French, with or without the Mela, they have plenty of exposure to Indian classical music, Indian literature in translation, and Indian cinema. It is much easier to see vintage Satyajit Ray any time in Paris than in Delhi. From the time the Upanishads were made available to the French in the eighteenth century by Anquetil-Duperron, and descriptions of the gardens of the Mughals were sent back to the landscape architects in Bourbon France, there has been a scholarly and popular interest in 'le monde indien' (which sounds so much better than 'the Indian subcontinent') quite out of proportion to France's miniscule territorial toeholds along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts.

Many decades ago the historian Dr S.P. Sen wrote an account of the French political adventure in India in two volumes; later, Dr Lotika Varadarajan translated the Memoirs of Francois Martin into English. But the fascinating range of levels at which individual Frenchmen studied India, traded with India and worked with Indians has never been put across to an Anglophone readership. Susan Gole's discovery and publication of Gentil's atlas of Mughal India (reviewed *TBR* Vol. XIV No. 4) showed us only the tip of the iceberg. One of the exhibitions mounted during the Annee de l'Inde was on this theme. Unfortunately, it was not very well publicised. An illustrated catalogue would be very useful. The book under review is a rather disappointing substitute for what could have been prepared, with a little more effort. Since it is not a 'popular' but a scholarly work, an index should have been appended. An annotated bibliography would also have been useful. The contributions vary from collections of trivia and anecdote to brief accounts of the French trading activities in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Haudrere and Weber are historians whose excellent theses on the French East India Company are available only in French. Their articles here give us only the briefest indication of their scholarly achievement.

None of the articles have endnotes and there is no way for the curious reader to burrow deeper into any of the themes touched upon here. There are references to the great work of Abbe Dubois, without indicating that the Abbe plagiarised another scholar's work and passed it off as his own. The essays of Fremont, Naidenoff, Deleury and D'Souza (7), Guillaume and Ortoli, which between them trace the story of French scholars who visited India from the 17th to the 20th century, from Tavernier and Bernier to Renou and Dumont, could be elaborated into a much larger work, with the proviso that the grain be separated from the chaff, the scholars from the 'adventurers'. Such a work would help us appreciate the remarkable way in which the sense of wonder of the European Enlightenment has been sustained till today. Likewise, Haudrere, Vincent, Deleury and D'Souza (5), Weber and Ortol make for another narrative, the political story. All told, the book is a pleasant offering of hors-d'oeuvres. We look forward to a substantial main course. ❑

Narayani Gupta, teaches at the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia.

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Through a Mythic Mask

An Interview with Dom Moraes

Sanjeev Sethi

Serendip, Dom Moraes' new collection of poems, published by Penguin India, was released on April 30 at Bombay. Like many poets, Dom is a reticent man; but he courteously allowed Sanjeev Sethi to draw him out on his work.

I will begin with an obvious question. How does it feel to get this collection of poems published?
Well, I'm pleased, in a way. This is the first collection of poems I've published since 1965, when my book *John Nobody* appeared. Although after that there was *Collected Poems*, which included a lot of new poems, there has been no single collection as such.

Why was that? Did you go through a poetically dry phase in the in between years?
No, I continued to write, but did not publish those poems (except a pamphlet of verse, *Bedlam & Others*, in 1967 and a privately printed book, *Absences*, in Bombay in 1983) as I felt they weren't very good.

Why have you chosen to call this collection Serendip? *Does it signify anything special?*
Serendip is the old name for Ceylon. It was called Serendip by Arabic sailors. It has not been used as a name for a long time, so it has a kind of mythical quality about it; and since the poem that carries the title is somewhat mythical, I thought it fitted in.

Why are you fascinated by mythological figures?
In my earlier poems I was constantly writing about myself but in this book there are just two poems where I speak in the first person. Coming back to mythological figures, I read Babar's autobiography *Babarnama*. It seemed to me there is a certain relationship between episodes in his life and, in a sense mine. Now, to speak in the persona of Babar adds another dimension to the poems because, as a poet, one is speaking through a mask but in such a case the mask is also one's face.

You spent your early years in India. Then you "visited every country in the world except Antarctica, which is not a country". For some years now you have been back here. Do you see a connection between your poetic output and a sense of belonging that you might feel here?
I don't feel a sense of belonging anywhere in particular. There is no reason why I should feel I belong here or there. I think where one is born is a kind of accident; and just because one is born somewhere is no reason to feel particularly attached to the place. Take the case of Philip Larkin. He liked to be at this place in England because he found it conducive, he could be private there, and not because he was fond of the place. In fact he hated it.

In other words you feel being private is more important. Does loneliness in anyway help the creative process?
Loneliness encourages you to speak to yourself. In that way it may encourage writing. Loneliness is not a physical condition. It is more of a spiritual state. One can be surrounded by people and still be lonely. I feel those who write poetry have a sense of being slightly isolated which is perhaps why they write. I guess it's their form of communication with the outside.

What do you have to say of poetry that does not communicate?
If it's good poetry, then in some way it must communicate. There are some poets whose poems do not communicate easily. For example Geoffrey Hill. I think he's a remarkable poet but he is extremely difficult to understand. One has to read him carefully. I have mentioned this idea in my introduction—I've said that, if one is going to read poetry, then one ought to give it the kind of close attention one would give to difficult prose.

The times that we are living in, everyone is in a hurry to be informed quickly. Doesn't complex poetry lose out in such times?
I think the more difficult the times, the more complex the poems; and these certainly are complex times. I also feel it's more difficult to be simple than to be profound.

It is often said that no writer or poet is really original. At best he is innovative. Do you agree?
Yes, most things have been said before because people have been writing for a very long time. It was Eliot who said that there are only three main subjects—birth, sex and death that one can write about. Though there is this concept of having a double somewhere, someone who is exactly like you, I don't think any one person is exactly like another. There is always a shade of difference. That's why I feel the way in which one person experiences these three subjects is slightly different from the way someone else experiences them.

Recently a magazine did a cover story on the 100 most powerful Indians. There was not one from the world of literature.
I think considering the kind of people who are powerful in India, it is rather complementary to literature (laughs). There are very few writers who want to be powerful. They may want to influence the minds of people, but they don't want to be powerful, as such.

Isn't influencing people's minds a kind of power?
Yes, it certainly is a kind of power, but it is not the kind of power by which people are subdued or subjugated. Writers have a sort of mental, spiritual influence.

How necessary do you think is interaction between poets for the development of their work??
It is necessary for a young poet to interact with his peers simply because they are all trying to do the same thing. I think the older you get, the less you need this kind of interaction because the older you get the more private you become. When you are young, you learn from others well as from interacting with other people. But there is a limit to what one can know and with age one realises this limit. Therefore one ceases to feel the need to interact, at least to interact as much as one felt the need to when one was young.

How do you react to opinions about your writing?
If someone I respect says that my work is good, I would obviously feel good about it. On the other hand if the same person says it's bad I would take note of it and, if this person has any sense of justice, he would tell me the reason why he thinks it's bad, which again will be good for me.

Has the effect on you of such reactions decreased over the years?
You see, if someone I respect were to tell me something I had written was bad, I would still react strongly. But if you're talking about an occasional review, then it doesn't bother me at all. Let them say what they want.

Does this mean that you don't think the quality of our literary reviews is very good?
Yes, I don't think they are very good. There are two kinds of reviewers. One is the reviewer who is himself a poet of some kind, while the other is a reviewer who has never attempted to be a poet but has a clever view of literature—its traditions and forms—and knows what he's talking about. A poet may not necessarily know what he's talking about but he might empathise with other poets. The academic standards in India are by and large not very high; as a result, academic reviewers are usually not very good. On the other hand, there are not many poets who review books. ❑

Sanjeev Sethi, is a young poet and has published a collection of poems entitled **Suddenly For Someone** *recently which has attracted notice.*

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A TRIBUTE TO SPORTSPERSONS

Salil Chari

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY VOLS. I & II : WILLS BOOK OF EXCELLENCE

Text by Ashok Kamath. Design by Zehra Tyabji and Sunil Sil

Orient Longman Ltd., 1989, pp. 204 & pp. 149, Rs. 150.00 and Rs. 175.00.

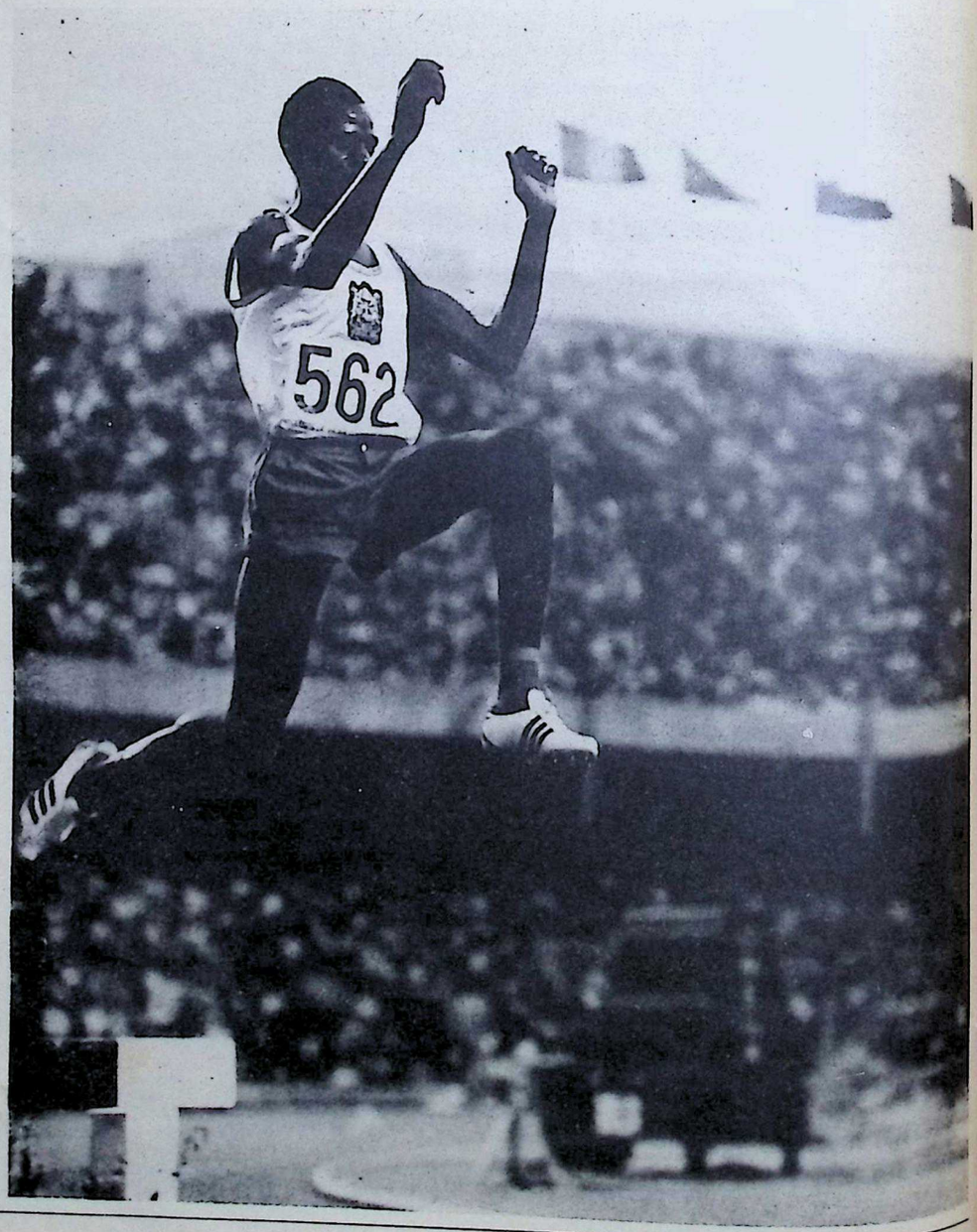
Sport has today become an integral part of our lives and sports photography has now become a highly specialised art. Continuing their excellent book of excellence series, Wills have brought out two books on sports photography as a tribute to those unseen men who bring alive for us, sporting events from all corners of the globe. These are two books which will delight the afficionado and the novice alike. Moreover with the standard of sport as it is in India such books are essential to provide some kind of impetus to raise the level of sport.

There is a striking difference between the two volumes. In volume I the authors have confined themselves mainly to athletics, cricket and tennis. The quality of printing is poor as quite a few photographs reproduced in the book are grainy and fuzzy. By contrast volume II is much better and unlike the cramped style of volume I, there is more variety and the selection of photographs too has been more imaginative.

Volume I starts with a chapter on 'Off Beat' sports. These exotic sports such as sand-skiing, ice sailing, jet-skiing and power boat racing are almost totally unheard of in India. But who would not like a taste of these after looking at the awe inspiring spectacle of power boat racing or the exhilarating ride of the surfers over the thundering breakers or at that adventurous girl jet skiing with careless abandon on the French Riviera. This section is the highlight of volume I. After a glimpse of sports in the fast lane things slow down a bit with a lot of cricket, tennis and athletics. Here too much emphasis has been laid on capturing the superstars of these sports in action rather than the emotions and drama or unusual shots and it becomes tedious to watch after some time. In the section on cricket there is an excellent selection of photographs. Though again we see only the big stars the action is there. The grace and elegance of the master batsmen, the fiery pace of the speedsters all come through. The contribution of that great quartet of Indian spinners, however is belied by their poor photographs. Neither do these photographs do justice to the charm and beauty of Katerina Witt.

In volume II we see fewer stars and more of what sport actually is. The whole gamut of human emotions is portrayed through these photographs. There is the joy and thrill of victory and the disappointment of defeat. There is the fun and frolic of mixed rugby as well as tragedy on the track. There is the intense competitiveness of Monica Seles and excellence that is exemplified by the demi god of diving Greg Louganis. This book covers a large part of the spectrum of sporting activity from the leisurely, like fishing, to the hard and fast like rugby. It would be worthwhile to go through this book rather than to try and convey all that is in it by words.

As the arena of sports is so vast, putting together a book on it is very difficult. There is such a wide choice available that a lot was bound to be left out due to constraints of space. Great rivalries, dramatic and controversial finishes and funny incidents are what make sports so appealing to the public and a lot of this is missing from these two books. One hopes that in the next volume the photographs will include more of these. ❑



Salil Chari a student of IIT, Delhi is himself a keen sportman.

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Social Action and the Labouring Poor: An Experience
Premila Lowis
This is a fascinating account of the experience the author shared with a group of social activists in organizing the labouring poor in Mehrauli, a rural suburb of Delhi, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1991, Rs. 95.00.

Development Planning and Structural Inequalities: The Response of the Underprivileged
Victor S. D'Souza
Interdisciplinary in nature, this study concentrates on the neglected but crucial goal of planning—the transformation of society—and examines the impact of economic development on the social structure. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 180.00.

Indian Society
S.C. Dube
A reprint of the author's work, this is the first in the restructured *Young India Library* series which aims at providing easy-to-read books to the youth to enable them to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of an socio-cultural and economic milieu. National Book Trust, India, 1990, Rs. 27.00.

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Dear Editor. . .

A thank you for the copies of The Book Review — very impressive. I am enclosing herewith a cheque and would be grateful of you could enrol me as a donor.

ARUN SINGH,
New Delhi

I must congratulate you and the others of the team for the excellent format of the journal. I saw a copy of it at the National Book Trust's stall in London. I wonder how I missed it at the New Delhi World Book Fair. I can assure you that we will do our best for the promotion of the journal. I really appreciate the long efforts behind the venture.

O.P. GHAI,
Chairman, Sterling Publishers,
New Delhi

Just today I saw the September–October issue of *The Book Review* which has been brought out in a new and very attractive format. I have for long been an admirer of the Review which helps me keep in touch with the world of books. I enclose my contribution for life membership of The Book Review Literary Trust.

C.V. RANGANATHAN,
Ambassador of India, Beijing

I have just seen Sri S. Krishnan's letter (September/October 1990) in which I have been accused of "the ultimaite Sin" of showing off. The reference is to my using several quotes from Hindi writers to embellish my appreciation of Vikram Seth's poems (March/April 1990). I do not know if showing off is the name of the brand but I was certainly thoughtless in giving the quotes without English translations. I plead guilty. But both you (the Editor) and I have been wronged by the second accusation, namely, that "name and fame" can lend to the hospitality of *The Book Review's* columns. Ultimate sin, yes; but original sin, not guilty please!

GOPAL GANDHI,
New Delhi

I was delighted to see the recent issues of the *Book Review:* it is aesthetically pleasant and intellectually stimulating. My congratulations to you and the publishers.

BRAJ B. KACHRU,
Professor of Linguistics University of Illinois,
Urbana Champaign, USA

Many thanks for sending me the September/October 1990 issue of *The Book Review.* I read the entire issue with great pleasure. The issue reveals a combination of editorial sophistication and expertise. Personally, I am grateful to you for including two Reviews by me; more importantly, the display is excellent.

A. RANGANATHAN,
Madras

❖

State and Society in India: Studies in Nation-building
T.K. Oommen
The book argues for language—based nation formation and cultural pluralism, and postulates that any attempt to shape nations on the basis of religion is the only real threat to the Indian polity. Sage Publications, 1990, Rs. 190.00

Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature
Ghanshyam Shah
The purpose of this book is to examine the burgeoning body of research by political scientists and sociologists into social movements in India from 1857 to the present, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 190.00.

■ WOMEN STUDIES

Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities (1890s–1980s)
Shahida Lateef
This book evaluates the role of Muslim women (in the context of their being Indian, Muslim and women) in society in terms of current practice and attitudes and also examines the historical factors which have influenced it. Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 160.00.

Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference—1927–1990
Aparna Basu & Bharati Ray
This is a detailed study of the AIWC, founded sixty-three years ago by Margaret Cousins and numbering among its pioneers Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Shareefah Hamid Ali and others, and its role in women's development in the last six decades. Manohar Publications, 1990, Rs. 210.00.

In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi
Madhu Kishwar & Ruth Vanita (Eds.)
The book offers a selection of the most incisive records which have appeared in one of India's leading journals on women's issues and human rights. Horizon India Books, 1990, Rs. 200.00.

■ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Liberation of Southern Africa: Selected Speeches of Olof Palme
E.S. Reddy (Ed.)
The speeches in this collection cover a period of twenty years from 1966 when he chaired the International Conference on South West Africa at Oxford to his last public address at the Swedish People's Parliament before he was tragically assassinated in 1986. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 125.00.

Socialism, Peace and Solidarity: Selected Speeches of Olof Palme
E.S. Reddy (Ed.)
The speeches in this volume cover a variety of themes from the concept of democratic socialism in Sweden and Swedish security to the major world problems. Vikas Publishing House, 1990, Rs. 195.00.

Development and Underdevelopment: The History, Economics and Politics of North South Relations
Hartmut Elsenhans
An important book that provides an indepth discussion of the dynamics of North-South relations, the relative balance of power between the countries of the North and South, and the extent of then interdependence. Sage Publications, 1991, Rs. 160.00.

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SOME RECENT TITLES IN ENGLISH

S.C. DUBE: *Indian Society*: 1990: Rs. 27.00
This book by the well known sociologist Prof. S.C. Dube is addressed to young readers who wish to know something about the historical roots, ideological foundations, and social organisation of Indian society. While discussing the major trends of change, it generates a critical awareness of India's social self and stimulates thinking about our country's past and present. The book, written in simple language, prepares the youth to face the problems which will confront them as soon as they assume their responsibilities as citizens, bread winners and full fledged members of society.

ROMILA THAPAR: *The Past and Prejudice*: 1990: Rs. 12.50
The historian plays a crucial role in the future of the society which he is studying and the image of the past is the historian's contribution to the future. This book discusses the challenging task facing the historian of India confronted with prejudices on the ancient Indian past.

ARJUN DEV: Jawaharlal Nehru: Years of Struggle: 1989: Rs. 37.00
This volume highlights not only Nehru's unbridled temperament, and some of his exceptional writings, but also his personal philosophy, his personality, his role in the anti-imperialist struggle and his views on religion, communalism, civil liberty, socialism and planning.

GIJUBHA BADHEKA: Divasvapna: 1990: Rs. 17.00
In this book the author propounds a new theory (for that period) on child education by emphasizing the need for an atmosphere of independence and self-reliance. *Divasvapna* is the imaginary story of a teacher who rejects the orthodox culture of education but remains enthusiastic towards children and continues to experiment while consciously neglecting the traditions of teaching through textbooks.

DINKAR KOWSHIK: Nandalal Bose: 1989: Rs. 18.00
This biography of the great and famous artist Nandalal Bose depicts many facets of his great personality. It is an introduction to the art heritage of the early part of the 20th century in which the artist had played an important role.

ALOKENDRANATH TAGORE: Ananindranath Tagore: 1990: Rs. 17.00
This is the biography of one who spearheaded the renaissance in Indian painting with his unique style. Abanindranath gave a new life and freshness to Indian art.

M.B. MATHUR: *Uttar Pradesh* (rev. ed.) : 1990: Rs. 30.00
Uttar Pradesh has witnessed the march of Indian history from time immemorial and has been the birthplace of many great men and movements that have shaped the country's destiny and culture. This book unfolds the story and discusses its economic development, fairs, festivals, places of interest and its changing villages.

D.C. VERMA: *Haryana* (3rd ed.): 1990: Rs. 22.50
Haryana has the distinction of being one of the two States commended by the World Bank recently for their progress in industry and agriculture. This book covers the several aspects of the life of the people of the State and their many-splendoured folk tradition of music and song, drama and dance, art and craft, together with the geographical highlights and history of the State.

OMESH SAIGAL: *Lakshadweep*: 1990: Rs. 33.00
This is a detailed study of a tiny island territory of a mere 32 km area situated 250–500 km south-west of the Kerala coast with a population of about forty-two thousand. Besides describing its physical and natural characteristics, the book portrays the life of its simple and colourful people, the history of the island since 1500 BC and how modernism and change are fast overtaking this lesser known archipelago.

R.L. BIJLANI & S.K. MANCHANDA: *The Human Machine*: 1990: Rs. 32.00
This book provides correct knowledge to a layman about the complex human organism. Functions of various parts of the body and disease due to deviation from normal functioning of the various parts of our body are explained here.

AMITABH MUKHOPADHYAY: *Roses*: 1990: Rs. 23.00
The rose is as popular in India as it is elsewhere in the world. Today, roses attract more attention than ever, but books on the rose in India are not many. This lucidly written book provides to the amateur as well as to commercial growers the latest technology in rose growing, and covers the legend, literature and art of the rose, besides its technical and scientific aspects.

B. CHOUDHARY: *Vegetables* (8th ed.): 1990: Rs. 28.00
This book acquaints those interested in vegetable growing with the facts and principles of successful production. Dr. Choudhury has not only given scientific facts about vegetables but has also included valuable tips for the common man who wants to grow different kinds of vegetables under conditions existing in India.

DR. S. PADMAVATI: *Heart Disease and the Layman*: 1990: Rs. 15.00
This book explains in its proper perspective what the dreaded heart disease means, and the changes that occur when a heart becomes deranged in structure and function. It also discusses the symptoms of the disease, its treatment and preventive steps.

R.L. BIJLANI & S.K. MANCHANDA: *The Human Machine*: 1990: Rs. 32.00
This book provides correct knowledge to a layman about the complex human organism. Functions of various parts of the body and disease due to deviation from normal functioning of the various parts of our body are explained here.

A.K. MALHOTRA: *Ocean Science and Technology* (2nd rev. ed.): 1990: Rs. 27.00
This book introudces the layman to the complexities of ocean science and technology more particularly as they relate to offshore oil exploration and production. The author describes briefly the various scientific disciplines whose knowledge is essential for work at sea; explains how offshore platforms and terminals, harbours and ports are designed and operated; and examines the problems ecnountered in constructing and laying submarine pipelines and in oil pollution and its control.

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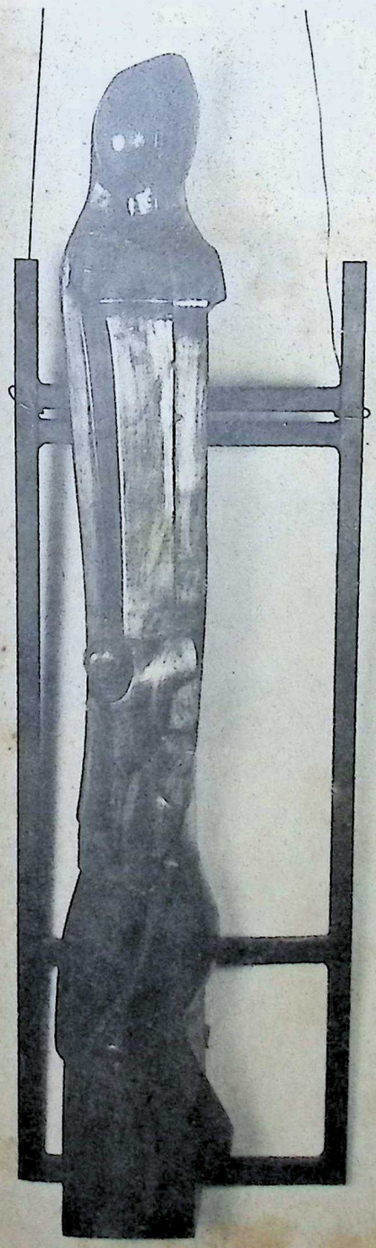

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NEW FROM OXFORD

■ **Breeding Birds of Kashmir** Edited by R.S.P. BATES AND E.H.N. LOWTHER

This attractively written book, though intended primarily for ornithologists, will also have a strong appeal to bird photographers. The authors worked as a team for more than twenty years and the 151 remarkable photographs illustrated here were taken in the course of sixteen visits. In all, 116 birds are fully described and a Supplement lists 45 more, a number of which probably breed at slightly lower levels in the valleys approaching the Vale.

Lt. Col. Bates took up bird photography within a year of his arrival in India, where he served in the Army for nearly thirty years. He is the author ofBird-Life in India.

E.H.N. LOWTHER began to photograph Indian birds in 1911, and the high standard of his work can be seen in A Bird Photographer in India.

Pages 390 *Rs.270* *Demy 8vo* *1991*

■ **The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi** Edited by RAGHAVAN IYER

This balanced selection of Gandhi's writings, taken from his letters, articles, and books, represents the complete cross-section of his thought, from his early years as a young barrister freshly called to the bar in London, to his final days as sage and counsel to newly independent India. The selection not only reveals the growth of his ideas but also their essential internal integrity and consistency. Similarly, it well illustrates the full facets of his personality: acerbic and melancholic, gentle and forcefully intellectual, humorous and intensely demanding of his followers. Most of all, what is revealed is the deep humanity of the man and his rich vein of genuine spirituality.

RAGHAVAN IYER formerly Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford, is Professor of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Pages 464 *Rs.280* *Demy 8vo* *1991*

■ **Urdu and Muslim South Asia** Studies in honour of Ralph Russell
Edited by CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE

Urdu has always been something of a Cinderella as a subject of serious study. Luckily for Cinderellas, they sooner or later find their fairy godmothers. Ralph Russell, unquestionably the outstanding Western scholar of Urdu of his generation, is paid tribute within this volume by several of the most major scholars of Urdu and its literature.

This volume will be of interest to all scholars of Indian history and politics, Islam in South Asia, and the development of an unique language and culture in South Asia.

CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE is Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Pages 216 *Rs. 190* *Demy 8'vo*

■ **Voices from Within** Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women
MALAVIKA KARLEKAR

These 'voices' belong to some remarkable and courageous women who questioned and commented on their own lives and times in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bengal. Excerpts from biographies, memoirs and letters have been used to bring them to life.

This is a very well-researched anthropological study of an interesting period of Indian history as perceived by women, and as such fleshes out the available literature on the subject. The book has an exhaustive bibliography and a detailed index. It also has some rare photographs.

MALAVIKA KARLEKAR has taught at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, and at Jamia Millia Islamia. She is currently a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi.

Pages 225 + 8 pages plates *Rs.225* *Demy 8vo* *1991*

■ **An Introduction to Tropical Rain Forests** T.C. WHITMORE

Written so as to be readily understood by the concerned layman as well as the student, this book looks at all aspects of tropical rain forests and man's impact on them. After a general introduction to rain forests the author describes plant and animal life in the forests, and their interconnections. The continuous process of change through geological time, forest dynamics, forest nutrient cycles and species richness are studied in subsequent chapters. Finally the author considers the human impact on rain forests, and ends on a fairly optimistic note. If human societies can only exercise the self-restraint to utilize rain forests by working within their natural limits then the gloom of the eighties will have served a useful purpose.

T.C. WHITMORE teaches at the Department of Geography, University of Oxford.

Pages 238 *Rs.275* *Cr. Quarto*

■ **The Primacy of the Political** R. SUNDARA RAJAN

The final part of a trilogy by (the other two being *Innovative Competence and Social Change* and *Towards a Critique of Cultural Reason*) this is an attempt to formulate a discursive model for political theory. The core of the work is therefore a lengthy hermeneutically oriented discussion of political judgement which projects the notion of political competence as a language mediated capacity of human subjects to recognize the common good by way of discourse. The work is a return to the classical idea of the political by way of a long detour via the theory of judgement, the Kuhnian theory of paradigms, Ricoeur's theory of textual hermeneutics and rhetorical theory. Ranging from discussions of sociological and political theory to philosophy of language and philosophical logic, the work seeks to connect the Aristotelian-Kautilyan conception of the political to contemporary debates in the metatheory of the social sciences.

R. SUNDARA RAJAN is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Poona. s former student of A.L. Basham, is visiting associate professor of Asian religions at Eastern Michigan University.

Pages 180 *Rs.175* *Royal 8vo* *1990*

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Co-published with Cambridge University Press

Religion under Bureaucracy: Policy and Administration for Hindu Temples in South India

Franklin A Presler

This is an innovative study of religion and politics in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu which focuses on the relationship between the state and the central religious institution of the area, the Hindu temple.

Dr. Presler examines the institutional challenge that Hindu temples have presented to the developing south Indian state over the last century and a half and the ways in which a government publicly committed to non-intervention in religious matters has come to involve itself deeply in temple life.

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As the March/April, 1991 issue of *The Book Review* goes to the press, the editorial board is left with rather mixed feelings over some recent events which have affected us directly. There was great elation when the B.D. Goenka awards for 1991 were announced in March and Nikhil Chakravartty, and Harindranath Dave, editor of *Janmabhumi*, a Gujarati newspaper, were declared the recipients. The citation says that Nikhil Chakravartty has been chosen for the award for building up *Mainstream*, a current affairs weekly of great repute and *The Book Review*, in addition to his journalistic achievements.

Nikhil Chakravartty, the fearless doyen of Indian journalism, has been a very special friend of *The Book Review* right since the time the journal made its first appearance in 1976. One of the original members of its advisory board, he came forward unhesitatingly to lend more than a helping hand when the fledgling journal faced a crisis in 1978 with the prospect of all its three founder-editors going out of Delhi simultaneously due to their various other commitments. By agreeing to support the journal financially and taking it under the umbrella of Perspective Publications, Nikhil Chakravartty saved *The Book Review* from an untimely and unwarrantedly premature closure. Today when business magnates are busy taking over newspapers and journals for ulterior motives this may not seem extraordinary. It must be pointed out however that in taking over a journal which was just about a viable venture but certainly could not be expected to churn out vast profits, what Mr. Chakravartty did was to prove his unworldliness regarding money as well as his genuine love for all intellectual exercise. *The Book Review* continued to be published under his sage and benign guidance which at no time ever deterioated into interference with editorial discretion—the three editors Prava Banerji, Manjulika Dube and myself will bear this out—for eleven years, until in 1989, the founder-editors were able to set up a trust to manage the affairs of the journal. *The Book Review* considers itself privileged to have been included in the citation of the Goenka award and the editorial/advisory board joins me in congratulating Mr. Chakravartty.

Elation was however soon to be tempered with shock and sorrow at the sudden passing away of Rajinder Paul, the well-known theatre critic, Vice-Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the owner of Paul's Press. A soft-spoken man who stoically bore his long illness patiently and cheerfully, Rajinder Paul's lasting contribution to the world of theatre was the journal *Enact* which he produced single-handedly for years. Through *Enact*, a journal of serious theatre criticism, Paul did a singular service to the theatre world by providing access to plays written in the Indian languages through English translations. Two special issues on Sanskrit and Kannada were to be printed in the next few weeks. A recipient of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh's award, Paul has written a full-length play, *Ashes above the Fires*. Some of the regular contributors to *Enact* were Girish Karnad, Rajinder Nath, J.N. Kaushal, Mario Frati, Anil Saari and Paul Jacob.

Rajinder Paul's love of theatre was complemented by his interest in typography, an evidence of his instinctive aesthetic sensibility. Paul's Press, though small in size, has been responsible for printing many prestigious journals. Paul's commitment which lent a touch of class to everything he produced, led him to take in hand the designing of much of what he printed.

Paul's association with *The Book Review* has lasted just over a year. Its printing was entrusted to him in January, 1991, when the new tabloid format was adopted. One of the unforgettable memories of our association with Paul would remain the story of how, quite critically ill himself, he sat up in his hospital bed directing operations when the special World Book Fair issue of *The Book Review*, the first in the new format, was being printed. *The Book Review* will feel his absence as keenly as the theatre world.

C.C.

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Khushwant Singh

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By W.H. Mcleod

Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 139, Rs 70.00

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Manohar Publications, 1990, pp. 362, Rs 250.00

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By James Massey

Manohar Publications, pp. 163, 1991, Rs 150.00

I have listed the four books in the order of their importance and will deal them accordingly. Herd Mcleod came out as a Christian missionary to the Panjab. There he learned to read Gurmukhi and studied some religion. His first book *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* questioned the dry foundations on which edifices of Sikhism had been raised by Sikh theologians. He was able to prove that the primary source material, *Janamsakhis* (birth stones), were unreliable and contradictory; and that the four long voyages Guru Nanak is said to have taken across India, Sri Lanka and the Middle East to Mecca, Medina and Baghdad could not be established. Orthodox Sikh historians vied with each other to heap abuse on Mcleod but were unable to refute his arguments. Mcleod continued writing on Sikhism and is currently Professor of History at the University of Otago in New Zeland. His small (121 pages) book *Who is a Sikh?* published two years ago, like his first, created a storm of controversy amongst educated Sikh circles. Definition of a Sikh is not a matter of academic interest but a live issue. There is an increasing number of young men who cut their long hair and shave their beards who nevertheless describe themselves as Sikhs. The Orthodox consider them as outside the pale of Sikhism, as *palits*—renegades. There are others who never wore their hair or beards long who describe themselves as *Sahajdhari* Sikhs—those who may in good time grow them. Then there are millions of Hindus who worship in gurdwaras and read Sikh scriptures in their homes. To make the confusion worse confounded, Sikhs and Hindus continue to intermarry: the only label one could affix on their progeny is that they are half-Hindu half-Sikh. Thus the legal definition that a Sikh is one who believes in the ten gurus and the Granth Sahib and belongs to no other religion is capable of many interpretations. However, the orthodox Khalsa have on their own decided that unless a person has been baptised and observes the five Ks of the Khalsa Panth (Kesh, Kangha, Kada, Kaccha and Kirpan) he or she will not be recognised as a Sikh. In short all we can say is that though all Khalsas are Sikhs, all Sikhs are not Khalsas. Mcleod analyses different definitions and comes to the conclusion that the word Sikh defies definition.

At the very fag end of his thesis Mcleod makes an attempt at defining a Sikh. "A Sikh is a person who reveres the ten gurus. The teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors concerning liberation through the divine Name incorporated in the scripture known as the *Adi Granth*. Although some Sikhs may not be aware of the contents of this scripture, all will venerate the scripture itself. They will also acknowledge the practice of *nam simran* to be mandatory, though for many the acknowledgement may be implicit and the actual practice rudimentary. The building or room which ritually houses the *Adi Granth* is called a gurdwara and all Sikhs acknowledge the sanctity which the scripture confers on it. They also recognize the role of the gurdwara in expressing the auto-caste ideals of the Gurus."

Mcleod goes on to further elucidate his lengthy definition. The followers of Guru Nanak were initially known as Nanakpanthis or Sikhs (from the Sanskrit *sishya* for disciple). Guru Gobind Singh literally changed the faces of Nanakpanthis to the hirsute Khalsa with their five Ks and destructive distinctive ritual for baptism and later for marriage and death. It will be seen that none of this adds up to a comprehensible definition.

It is in this context that Nripinder Singh's *The Sikh Moral Tradition* acquires special importance. Nripinder is the son of a well-known Sikh historian Dr Harbans Singh currently busy compiling an encyclopaedia of Sikhism. After taking his degree from the Panjab University at Patiala he got a doctorate in the history of religion and ethics from Harvard University. He now lives and works in Reston (U.S.A). Most of his work is non-controversial except the one long chapter on *rahit* tradition. He sets out to prove that ever since its inception, Sikhism has maintained an unbroken ethical tradition. He is on trickier ground when he deals with the transformation of Sikhism from the pacifist, quietist sect to the bearded long-haired militant fraternity of the Khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 AD. There is nothing in the Granth Sahib compiled in 1604 AD about growing long hair and beards, of baptism or the five Ks. There is no clear evidence that Guru Gobind Singh spelt out why he wanted his followers to remain unshorn, carry a kirpan, a steel bangle (kada) and the other Ks. It was after his death that a whole corpus of *rahitnamas* came to be written claiming that they were ordinances of the last guru. These *rahitnamas* contradict each other, are full of do's and don'ts which have little relevance to the Khalsa tradition which developed later. The author concedes "Rahitnamas are several . . . their dates of composition vary. Authorships are spurious. Guru Gobind Singh, it is claimed variously, was writer, dictator, oveseer, patron of all these." He goes on to opine, "We must also not accept out-

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Khushwant Singh is a reputed journalist and columnist, and the author of the two-volume History of the Sikhs.

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right that they are from the Guru's close associates." Only one, he admits, was by a man who was baptised by the Guru himself. He concludes that "the *rahits* must have come into circulation some time in the middle of the eighteenth century." Having said all this tongue-in-cheek Nripinder Singh has shied away from saying that there is no historical evidence to connect what the last Guru may have ordained and what is being practised today in his name. It is evident that he does not want to risk rousing the ire of fanatic elements in the Khalsa Panth and become a target of their wrath.

Nripinder Singh has imbibed the verbosity of American scholastic tradition: what can be said in five words in spun out into fifty and when it comes to answering simple questions like why did Guru Gobind require his followers to retain their hair and beards unshorn, instead of answering directly, Nripinder expounds a longwinded explanation which leaves the question unanswered. He writes "The outwardly visible symbols with which the Guru adorned his Khalsa and the several campaigns on which he led them were more than a metaphorical expression of the inner valiance of the soul to stand for justice. They were impressed upon the Sikh imagination in a much more vital sense. They were marks of the bond that linked the Sikh community in the common effort to create a moral order based on the ideals as comprehended in the very nature and attribute of man's Maker. Through this conviction revived by and celebrated in the symbols—Sikhs acquired a new sense of obligation to perpetuate their moral heritage and to make it a sovereign part of the pervading ethos as well as of that in times to come." What does all this add up to?

Nripinder Singh continues: "the five Ks were a declaration of privilege as also of the intent to be prepared steadfastly to uphold the ideals that the Guru had demarcated." He then links it to the litany chanted at the end of Sikh prayer: *Rajkareyga Khalsa*, the Khalsa shall rule. For one there is no historical proof that this litany was phrased by Guru Gobind Singh: it is now attributed to him by supporters of Khalistan. For another, in the same breath (i.e. the same book) Nripinder Singh admits that the five Ks selected out of a jumble of *rahitnamas* gained currency after the Guru's death and are in any event unreliable. He can't have it both ways.

Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century is a compilation of papers presented at a conference held at the University of Toronto in February 1987. All the members are acknowledged authorities on the topics on which they have written. Though a valuable addition to Sikh studies this compilation will be of interest only to scholars engaged in research and not to the layman. It is meant more for university and public libraries than for the shelves of a home library.

James Massey is a Panjabi Presbytrian Christian, the translator of the Bible in Panjabi and author of several books on Christianity. His study of Sikhism is within the framework of Christian concepts. There is nothing wrong with that method of approach as Judaic religions, of which Christianity is the most important, do provide valid points of reference. The main trouble with Massey's thesis is that it is overloaded with unncessary detail which serves no purpose. He spends an extraordinary amount of space discussing *mul mantra*, the root belief of Sikhism enshrined in the opening lines of Guru Nanak's morning prayer *sapji*. All that the *mul mantra* attempts is a definition of God: He is only one, the supreme truth, creator of the world, without fear and without enmity; He pervades the universe, beyond time, death, or rebirth, self-existent. In this it closely resembles the *Surat-ul-Fatiha* of the Koran. It is a categorical statement without any esoteric, hidden meanings.

Why Massey should have laboured at great length to dissect every word and append the way it has been translated by over a dozen translators of Sikh scriptures is neither comprehensible nor illuminating. The most irritating feature of his thesis is his transliteration. Why in the name of the Guru should the eminent Sikh poet and theologian Dr Bhai Vir Singh be written as Bhai Sahiba Dakatura Bhai Vira Singha, Sahib Singh as Sahiba Singha, Jodh Singh as Jodha Singh, Piara Singh Padam as Padama Piara Singha? It is a small mercy he has not taken liberties with my name and converted it to Khushwanta Singha. ❑

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The Anatomy of Ethnic Violence

N.S. Jagannathan

MIRRORS OF VIOLENCE: COMMUNITIES, RIOTS AND SURVIVORS IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by Veena Das

Oxford University Press. Delhi, 1990, pp. X+407, Rs 225.00

THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNALISM IN COLONIAL NORTH INDIA

By Gyanendra Pandey

Oxford University Press, Delhi,1990, pp. XVI+297, Rs. 250.00

The first book is the outcome of a seminar on ethnic violence in South Asia sponsored by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies held in Kathmandu in 1987. If the seminarists were in search of a unified theory that will hold together the three components of their subject—ethnicity, violence and South Asia—the title of the book is an eloquent admission of their failure to find it. Apart from definitional problems surrounding these highly loaded words, in isolation or in conjunction, in the present state of social sciences, "calls for a general theory of ethnic violence sound increasingly hollow", as Sudhir Kakar puts it is his contribution to the first volume.

In saying this, one is not adopting the supercilious attitude of "practical men" towards "theory". One is merely emphasizing the contextual and historical differences in the patterns of violence in different countries and in the different interfaces of ethnicities. As Tolstoy said, "All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Secondly, as Veena Das herself says, "one of the greatest lacunae in our understanding of collective action, including collective violence, is the lack of an organized body of empirical knowledge on the issues." This is a handicap even in understanding national predicaments, let alone attempting larger comparative evaluation of different national experiences and discerning underlying patterns, if any.

But, if you are not looking for a capsulized theory of ethnic violence, you will find the book extremely rewarding in the particular illuminations scattered on almost every one of its pages.

Thematically, the book is divided into three parts, roughly corresponding to the three components of its title: The first examines riots as "a moment in the system", providing an occasion for reflection on the nature of the societies in which they occur either as aberrations or the inevitable outcome of their dynamics, according to your preference. The second part is quasi-empirical and examines some specific riot-situations: the frenzied violence against the Tamils in Colombo in 1983 and against the Sikhs in Delhi in 1984; the caste clashes over reservation in Gujarat in 1985 and the Pathan-Muhajir riots in Karachi in 1986. (The seminar having taken place early in 1987, neither the Mandal nor the Mandir-Masjid eruptions of 1990, which would have been even more instructive, finds mention.) The third part deals with "eye-witness" accounts by survivors. They are valuable as providing at once both facts and a refraction of these facts through the subjective prism of the victim-observer. The former may or may not be reliable in every particular but the latter is important as providing an insight into how the survivors reformulate their shattered world. Veena Das' narrative of her encounter with the victims of 1984 Delhi riots following Mrs Gandhi's assassination is deeply moving even as it is sociologically illuminating.

According to Veena Das, extant literature on collective action or crowd behaviour suggests three possible approaches. A riot, which is nothing but violent collective action, can be viewed as an aberrant moment of "hostile out-burst" in an otherwise more or less even flow of acquiescence—"a Dionysian punctuation in an increasingly Promethean world", as she puts it. Or it could be seen as merely a variant of embedded animosities, assiduously tended by hostile ideologies finding their natural moment of violent encounter. Another approach could be to see it as elemental protest against injustices no longer bearable. In this manifestation and if successful, it is called a revolution rather than a riot. As Sir John Hamington, a 17th century wit said, "Treason never prospers, for if it did, none dare call it treason."

Whether a riot is seen as a discontinuity or a culmination, the underlying causes and continuities are more important than the moment itself both for theoretical and practical reasons. This is particularly true of communal riots in India which constitute the major preoccupation of the first book. (The second book is wholly devoted to this question.)

Communalism in the pejorative sense of a hostile group-attitude is one of India's less attractive contributions to the English language. As Pandey points out, this meaning is still to make it to the Oxford English Dictionary. Even the 1959 Shorter Oxford, which makes a reference to the Indian provenance of this meaning, does not convey the full flavour of the disapproval with which the word is routinely used in India.

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The discussion of the semantics of communalism and its putative opposite secularism—another word that has acquired peculiar Indian overtones—in several of the contributions to the first and in the whole of the second book is indeed of absorbing interest, particularly in the context of current controversies stirred up, most proximately, by the Mandir-Masjid dispute at Ayodhya. Ashis Nandy's piece on the politics of secularism is an outstanding contribution that cuts sharply through the cliches and false stereotypes in the current debate on the subject. There is no space here to summarize Nandy's richly textured arguments. But his distinction between religion as faith and a way of life and religion as ideology is a profoundly important one, ignored alike by the rival religious ideologies (who see religion as power) and by agnostic modernizers to whom religious faith, of whatever hue, is by definition contemptible as unreason. And when the last category also enjoys by the accident of history the legitimacy of a dominant elite and State power, you have a triad in ideological confrontation and as repositories of violence.

Against religion as ideology and power, Nandy posits religion as a way of life, iridescent with a thousand cultural nuances that are yet ethnically

N.S. Jagannathan is the Editor of Indian Express.

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synthesised. Different faiths, ethnically impregnated with shared racial memories and inherited mores, live in benign co-existence. In this view, "religion is a tradition which is definitonally non-monolithic and operationally plural. . . . It has, as a way of life, in effect, to turn into a confederation of a number of ways of life which are linked by a common faith that has some theological space for the heterogeneity which everyday life introduces."

It is easy enough to illustrate this at the level of popular religion and a political folk behaviour. Ideology may aggregate Indonesian and Iranian Islams into a transcontinental unity at odds with other such aggregates. But within a radius of three miles of Nagore, a coastal town in Tamil Nadu, you will see people of all faiths visiting Hindu, Muslim and Christian shrines and making their votive offerings for prayers granted. (Incidentally, may I suggest, greatly daring, that South India by and large practises religion as a way of life and North India as ideology?)

It is not a question, as "secularists" put it with condescending tolerance, of religion being the private affair of an individual. It is not. It has indeed its public aspect but it is, at least in South India, accommodative and assimilative of diversities. To quote Nandy again, "Most non-modern Indians, ... pushed around by the political and cultural forces unleashed by colonialism still operating in Indian society, have unwittingly opted for the accommodative pluralistic meaning. while India's westernized intellectuals have consciously opted for the abolition of religion from the public sphere."

Nandy's moral has in irresistible logic: "the time has come for us to recognize that instead of trying to build religious tolerance on the good faith of a small group of de-ethnicized, middle class politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals, a far more serious venture would be to explore the philosophy, the symbolism and the theology of tolerance of the various faiths. . . . The State systems (should) learn something about religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism rather than wish that ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs would learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of statecrafts. " Both Nandy and Pandey consider communalism in the sense the word has come to acquire in modern Indian discourse as a "colonial construct". It was a semantic and conceptual device serving several conscious and unconscious purposes. Some of these purposes were sinister in intent but others were merely the result of an attempt to encapsulate a complex, unfamiliar, social reality in terms familiar to the alien rulers.

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But the reality of a Hindu-Muslim divide in pre-British India cannot be denied either at the ideological or, intermittently, even at the popular level. But what were inchoate, low-intensity antagonisms in the pre-colonial era of dispersed—and towards the end, decadent—central political authority, became—or came to be seen as—settled hostilities in the colonial era by a complex set of factors. One of them was, as Nandy points out, the ascendancy of the concept of nation-State over other founts of social and political sanctions that were loosely operative in pre-colonial India. Another was the imperial necessity of controlling a conquered population. A third was the need—especially in the context of "communal riots'—for a theory of social behaviour to underpin practical governance, particularly in its aspect of law and order maintenance.

Such theorizing gives a free-play for preconceived prejudices, false historiography, analogical errors and plain arrogance of the ruling classes towards a subject people and their beliefs.Even when well-intentioned attempts at understanding an alien reality were made, the paradigms developed were only partially valid. But such paradigms exercised their own tyranny on subsequent thinking on the subject and often became self-fulfilling prophecies. Pandey's book—and his contribution to Veena Das's volume—meticulously document the self-perpetuating error in the 19th century British perception of an ineradicable Hindu-Muslim hostility. Once established, such a "construct" came to govern not only British but Indian behaviour. These "false images and deceptive signs" endure to this day, partially absolving the British of exclusive guilt in this matter.

Even in an extended review of this length, it is not possible to give more than a glimpse of the thematic richness, depth and range of scholarship and intellectual rigour of discourse in these two books. At a time when the terms of public discourse on secularism and communalism are set by the politician's cliches eagerly lapped up by intellectuals, it is refreshing to read two books that treat the subject with unwavering intellectual honesty and scholarly precision. ❑

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A Seasoned Partnership

A.K. Damodaran

RED STAR AND THE LOTUS: THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

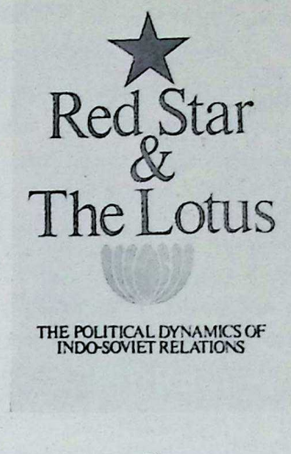
By S.S. Rai

Konark Publishing Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 1990, pp. 360, Rs. 200.00

This is an ambitious book. It attempts to give a comprehensive survey of all aspects of the political, strategic and economic relations between the Soviet and the Indian nation states. This is, on the whole, familiar territory. A few books have been written both about the pre-Independence period and the first difficult years after 1947 when the two countries warily observed each other as possible partners in a difficult international environment. Then came more than three decades of an unusually successful partnership between New Delhi and Moscow which had, as its primary motivation, strong, bilateral interests. There were, however, all the time, specific third country linked interests which affected the relationship. This has been an almost overstudied aspect of India's foreign policy both from the sympathetic and the critical angles. Dr. Rai's book is unusual in the sense that it does not limit itself to the official relationships between the two governments and their responses to the changing world situation in the late fifties and the early sixties in one phase and in the late sixties and the early seventies in another equally interesting phase. This part of the work has been abundantly done but what makes this analysis of unique interest in the manner in which this analysis has been supplemented by an equally detailed investigation of the links between the political parties in India on the one hand and the CPSU and its international instrument, the Comintern, on the other. Out of the ten chapters in the book, four are devoted to this parallel, political game. Here comes the story of M.N. Roy and Lenin in the twenties, the problems between the Congress and the CPI in the thirties and the tangled skein of national interest and ideological solidarity which complicates inter-party relations after the splits in the Communist Party in 1964 and the Congress in 1969. To complete the picture of the state-to-state equation there is a separate chapter on the military sphere which goes back to the middle fifties with Marshall Zhukov's visit to India a few months after the first summit in 1955 and matured, after a hesitant and diffident start, into one of the great extra-ideological collaborations of the post-war period. The book is an example of rigorous analysis, eschewing the easy facile conclusions and attempts to draw a pattern unjustified by the available evidence. This has meant that there is nothing at all of the parallel developments in literature, culture and educational exchange. Technical education particularly has been one of the central realities of the Indo-Soviet encounter since the need for training engineers and technicians for the Bhilai Plant led to hundreds of Indian trainees going to the Soviet Union both for advanced skills and also for basic education. This is, of course, only one part of an ambitious global programme initiated during the Khruschev years along with the new thesis of competition and not merely coexistence between the two social systems. Thirty-five years after the experiments began, we have a large number of individuals in both countries who are comfortable in each other's societies.

These are the only areas unexplored in this excellent study. There could also have been a little more attention devoted to the so-called mass organizations in both countries. In the present revisionist period after the changes in 1989, it would be easy to undervalue these rather awkward instruments of official friendship but they did contribute in their time to mutual awareness: the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, the Soviet Society for Friendship with Foreign countries and more recently, the Friends of the Soviet Union patronized by the Congress (I) have all contributed their little bit. A complete picture of the relationship between the two countries will have to take into account some very perspective studies of the Indian economy by Soviet scholars. The fact that there is no comparable corpus of investigative work about the Soviet Union done by Indian scholars is one of the unfortunate results of official reticence in Moscow in these matters. This is the reason why even today Dr. Rai and other scholars like him have to depend on American studies of an admittedly high and objective standard. The remarkable study of Indian communism by Oversteer and Windmuller which is now over 30 years old is even today the major source book for all research scholars, and

A.K. Damodaran, a retired foreign service officer, is a well-known commentator on international affairs.



America's disobliging attitude to India's independence at the San Francisco Conference (1945) simply added further fuel to the disenchantment of the Indian leaders with the united states government. The attitude adopted by the Soviet Union at this Congress was diametrically opposed to the stand of the United States. By expressing its support for India's independence the Soviet Union endeared itself to the Indian Nationalists even though CPSU, the Comintern and Stalin himself had scarcely concealed contempt for INC's bourgeois leadership. Nehru made it plain that independent India would take the differing attitudes of the major powers to Indian independence into account when formulating its foreign policy.

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During the period 1969-71, the Soviet Union and India—each guided by its own perspective of the changing relationships entailed in the various power triangles affecting the world in general and South Asia in particular—saw the need for establishing a closer relationship. This was in fact institutionalised in the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty.

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The course of Indo-Soviet relations was largely shaped by the perspectives of the two states. . . . The most important stimulus for a steady development of a close relationship between the two countries lay in the absence of conflicts of interests between the two parties. Indeed it can be said that the source of conflict between Soviet strategic interests and ideas about world revolution on the one hand and on the other India's economic, political and military interests were removed when the post-Stalin Soviet leadership reversed the Soviet Union's earlier stand on the Indian Nationalists by regarding the Congress Party, first under Nehru and subsequently under Indira Gandhi, as essentially "progressive" in character.

From Red Star & The Lotus

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> *In the context of our discussion concerning the relations between the Eurasian neighbours India, Pakistan, China and the Soviet Union* rapprochement *between any two former antagonists will create imperatives for reconciliation with the other neighbour. . . . Indo-Soviet relations are unlikely to register any dramatic or radical change and the* Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty *will be renewed in 1991. The present trend of emphasis on the economic and trade aspects of the relationship will continue.*
>
> *From* Red Star & The Lotus

political writers of both the right and the left persuasions. Donaldson's study of the Soviet assessment of an independent India in the early years is another rich quarry for both Indian and foreign investigators. The time has come to rectify this with the new Glasnost in Moscow. There are bound to be interesting nuances about the Comintern period both during the uneasy time before the Communist Party was officially established in India and the late thirties when the united front concept and the consequent change of attitude towards Congress were suggested to Indian party through Palme Dutt and the CPGB. Dr. Rai's own study is complete and non-partisan. It is most useful in the emerging ideological divergence between "progressive" nationalism as represented by Nehru and the demands of solidarity with the Soviet Union as projected by the League against Imperialism. The evolution of the Communist group within the socialist party and as an official part of the Indian National Congress in the late thirties is discussed; however, there is insufficient awareness of major events like the Subhas Bose election and, more important, the peasant movements in various parts of the country.

The personality of Gandhi and his ideological position within the Indian bourgeoisie has been carefully delineated; the assessment of his role in Indian history has always been a major intellectual issue within the Soviet indological circles. It goes back to the Lenin-Roy controversy of 1920. It is reflected in the totally negative assessment of Gandhi by the Oriental Institute in the late forties and some semblance of a return to a balanced appreciation in the new editions of the *Soviet Encyclopaedia* published in the fifties and the seventies. All this has been projected here with remarkable sensitivity, along with the much more familiar story of Nehru's anti-fascist persona.

Much the larger part of the book deals with relations between the two countries after 1947. Here the original assessment in Moscow of India as a crypto-colonial country is well-known. There was an organic link between this impression and the domestic problems between the left and the right in India. Dr. Rai is at his best in the study of the evolution of the Indian left programme from extra-Parliamentary, near guerrilla activity to a sedate agenda of governmental participation. This is the great story of the containment of the Indian leftism in the fifties which went along the parallel retreat from the co-operative and other "socialistic" programmes in the official practice of the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru. By the end of the fifties the inter-party dilemmas diminished in importance in relation to the large global questions. The Sino-Soviet dispute, the Soviet Union's desire for detente and the significant role played by India in major international issues made it possible for a relationship of great sympathy and understanding to be established between the two countries in spite of continuing reservations on either side. This is also the period when the defence collaboration becomes a fact of life.

The ambiguities of the Soviet position in 1962 are well-known. Here Moscow's relations with Beijing and New Delhi are involved. Later, after Tashkent, comes another period of ambivalence in which Moscow tried with conspicuous lack of success to steering a middle course between Islamabad and Delhi. The border conflict between China and the Soviet Union in 1969 and the deepening of the ideological schism after the Cultural Revolution which led to an attempt to exclude China in the collective security system proposal of Brezhnev are all examples of useful but never total understanding between the two countries. The Bangladesh conflict and the Indo-Soviet Treaty marked a qualitative change. This phase, perhaps the most well-known part of the Indo-Soviet connection, is carefully discussed here. There is very little to quarrel with the assessment. There is, however, a rather odd statement, unsupported by any evidence, that "the Soviet Union had taken the precaution of warning China that any intervention on its part in the South Asian crisis would provoke Soviet military reprisals in Sinkiang". This is the first time I have come across this story. It seems highly unlikely. There was much more to Chinese restraint during the Bangladesh crisis than the restraining influence of a possible Soviet counter attack. The leadership in Beijing was in disarray after Lin Biao's death. They were also acutely conscious of the ideological embarrassment of identifying themselves with the suppression of a genuine national liberation movement in East Pakistan.

The Soviet response to the Emergency in India was sympathetic and positive given the almost total support promised by the Communist Party of India. Here the author is at his best in explaining the differences between the two Communist parties at a difficult time and the adroit manner in which the Soviet Communist Party succeeded in retaining its links with the CPI(M). By the end of the seventies a certain middle position was achieved. There was no longer a totally rejectionist attitude towards what had been written off as a pro-Beijing rebel group.

This is important. One of the balanced conclusions of this book is the manner in which, over the decades, the Soviet Union came to accept the necessity for moderation in the political agenda of the leftist parties in the specific Indian conditions. The chapter on Indian Communism, International Communism and Indian State which forms the conclusion of the argument of the book ends in this confident assessment: 'The main conclusion of this analysis must be the Soviet Union, the Indian State, and the Indian Communist Movement (before and after the 1964 split) has contributed to a weakening of the left popular movement as a whole in post-colonial India".This seems fair enough. There are related developments like the failure of Royism in the thirties and the much more serious failure of social democracy in the fifties. The Congress under Nehru and Indira Gandhi attempted with some success to take over the progressive agenda. The response of the official leftist parties, Communist and Socialist, was one of "intra-Parliamentary" opposition. It led to some genuine achievements at the local level in some parts of the country. It also led to the emergence of a new angry youth movement with an extra-parliamentary agenda in the various Marxist-Leninist groups. In all these discussions the Indo-Soviet connection is of only marginal significance.

On the whole this is a satisfying examination of a very important aspect of India's foreign policy. I have only one major complaint about the analysis. There is a separate chapter devoted to placing Indo-Soviet relations in the framework of India's relations with the West. It is a well-written chapter but deals only with the United States. India's relations with Britain and the Commonwealth were of crucial importance in the late Stalin years. There is some evidence that Nehru's decision to remain the Commonwealth as a sovereign republic was one factor which influenced a positive reassessment of the new Indian ruling group in Moscow. Dr. Rai refers to the meetings between Stalin and Dr. Radhakrishnan and K.P.S. Menon. He could have gone further down the trail. There is enough evidence in Dr. Gopal's biography of Nehru.

These are small complaints about exceptionally well-written, tightly argued book. Originally a Ph.D thesis, it has been updated to include even Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing. Gorbachev's own contribution to a new revival of the old friendship is noted. Surprisingly, the New Delhi Declaration is mentioned only in a footnote. ❑

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Kashmiriyat—A Culture of Synthesis

A.S. CHIB

KASHMIR—BEHIND THE VALE

M.J. Akbar

Viking & Penguin India, 1991, pp. 223, Rs. 250.00

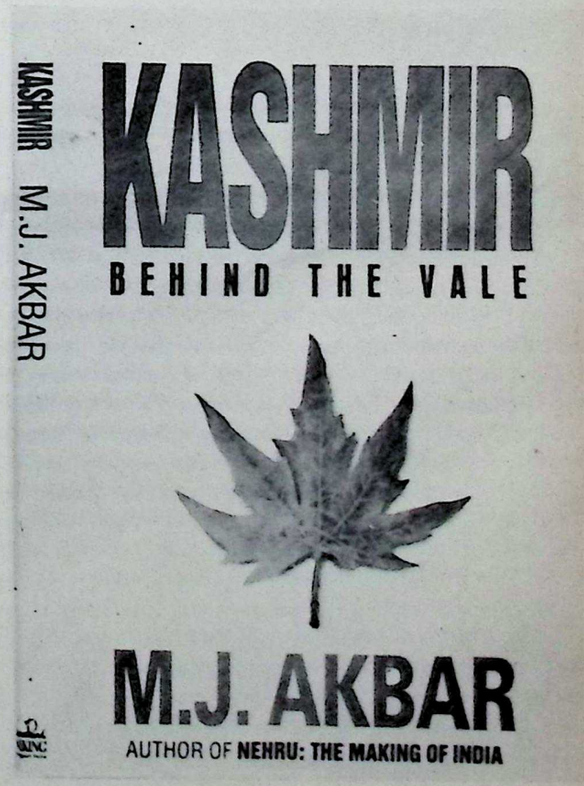
Books on Kashmir are galore, both in India and Pakistan. But seldom has any one that I know, attempted to delve deep into history ancient and modern and come up with a definition of "Kashmiriyat", as a continuous tradition of character, temperament, and culture. M.J. Akbar in his new book, *Kashmir—Behind the Vale* has done just that. Quoting from an eminent Kashmiri historian Pandit Kalhana, he describes one aspect of the Kashmiri character: "The country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit but not by the force of soldiers. The inhabitants are only afraid of the world beyond."

Talking about religious beliefs M.J. Akbar cites several instances which reveal the Kashmiri people's natural inclination to shun fanaticism and bigotry while allowing the more humanistic type of religious thought to permeate and enrich Kashmiri culture. He gives the example of the lasting impression and influence of Buddhism and Sufi mysticism on Kashmir that is visible till today. Regarding Islam the author makes very interesting observations, that while plunderers like Mahmud of Ghazni and Changez Khan had to retreat, three hundred years later Syed Bilal Shah, "brought the love and compassion of Islam; and the faith continues to flourish to this day." This trend of a more tolerant Islam was carried forward by another great ruler of Kashmir, Zainul Abidin, whose life and rule, according to the author, "were the distillation of that spirit called Kashmiriyat,—a culture of synthesis, understanding, and humanism; and the history of the next five hundred and more years proves that Kashmir cannot be ruled except by this spirit."

Out of the Moghul rulers interestingly enough it was Emperor Akbar, his son Jehangir and grandson Shah Jehan, all liberal and tolerant in thought and action, who made a lasting contribution and left an indelible impression on its people. They provided a viable administrative system as well as facilities for the people to enjoy the natural beauty of Kashmir. It was Akbar who came up with the novel idea that some of the boats plying in the Dal Lake could be made residential. This gave birth to the idea of a house-boat. These Moghul Emperors also gave support to the production and marketing of exquisite Kashmiri art objects such as shawls and carpets, for which the subcontinent provided a huge market. On the other hand Aurangzeb with his fanatical Islamic zeal and puritanical outlook tried to reverse the positive contribution made by his ancestors. He not only sowed seeds of discord between the Hindus and Muslims but enhanced Sunni-Shia conflict amongst the Muslims. Aurangzeb's demise was followed by a period of unrest and "when Delhi became fragile, confused or simply lost in bitter internecine conflicts for power, a province like Kashmir became the plaything for governors released from much sense of responsibility." When one thinks about the current situation one realises how apt is the well known saying that history repeats itself.

The account of the events in Kashmir during the last years of Maharaja Hari Singh's rule is along familiar lines. The last of the Dogras the Maharaja is depicted as an oppressive potentate who revelled in ill-treating his subjects, particularly the Muslim community. It was therefore not surprising, according to M.J. Akbar that "the confrontation between an overwhelming Muslim mass and an oppressive Hindu government acquired a communal tinge".

In 1931, the situation was further complicated by the severe economic depression amongst the Muslim masses and the lack of employment opportunities for the thousands of educated unemployed Hindu youth. Added to this, the British kept giving direct encouragement to the Muslim agitators against the Maharaja's rule. The virus of militant Islam which was given impetus by the All India Muslim Conference held in Lahore aroused communal passions and resulted in Hindu-Muslim riots in Jammu. Sheikh Abdullah, whose grandfather was converted to Islam under the influence of a Sufi divine, had just returned to Kashmir after completing his M.Sc from Aligarh Muslim University. His political career began by his becoming the President of a new party, the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. According to Akbar, "Abdullah realised that he had to correct the line on which he was travelling: the movement had to represent the whole of Kashmir and not just the Musalman; become a freedom struggle rather than just a sectarian protest." In 1932 he proposed the inclusion of Kashmiri Hindus in the party. This step had a salutary effect as it began to bridge the political Hindu-Muslim divide. On the negative side it resulted in the breakway of the orthodox section of Muslims led by Mir Waiz, Yusuf Shah.



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> **India must attain her full freedom based on unity... I trust that Kashmir will play an honourable part in the events to come. I hope that the conference will review all these events that are happening in true perspective so that the people of Kashmir may attain their freedom in the larger freedom of India.—*Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's message to the First Session of the All India Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.***
>
> —M.J. Akbar's *Kashmir: Behind the Vale*

Sheikh Abdullah continued his efforts tirelessly to make the party even more broad based and secular. In a special session of the party's General Assembly in 1939 Abdullah succeeded in obtaining a majority vote in favour of changing the name of the party to "National Conference". Abdullah had now identified himself with the struggle for Independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The Kashmir National Conference in its first formal session received an important message from the Congress Party which in essence, stated:

"All the world is on the move and India must move with it, not separately or in isolation. India must attain her full freedom based on unity.... I trust that Kashmir will play an honourable part in the events to come. I hope that the Conference will view all these events that are happening in true perspective so that the people of Kashmir may attain their freedom in the larger freedom of India." The author of this message was none other than Pandit Nehru.

It is important and significant that much before Independence of India in 1947, there was an active and democratic movement in Kashmir which identified itself with the secular democratic ideals of the Indian National Congress. An even greater significance behind this step was the fact that a Muslim majority State of Jammu and Kashmir had openly cast its lot against the ideology of the two nation theory advocated by Muslim League led by Muhammed Ali Jinnah. Yet another aspect of significance was that the party of Skeikh Abdullah rejected as well the ideology of the Hindu Maha Sabha which advocated the creation of a "Hindu Rashtra"..... "Hindu fundamentalism was an alien to the culture of Kashmir as Muslim fundamentalism. Both the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir remained with Nehru and Abdullah even as in the rest of the subcontinent the unity began to crack under the twin pressures of riots and impending freedom. Kashmiriyat survived the tests of that tragic decade."

In an otherwise objective rendering of the dramatic events in Kashmir at the time of partition of India, M.J. Akbar's criticism of Indian leaders, especially Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, in delaying action in Kashmir is unfair. He has overlooked the reality and the gravity of the situation following the Partition. The upheaval caused by the influx of millions of refugees, with the army itself being partitioned and the presence of British Commanders-in Chief in India and Pakistan and a host of similar problems, the Government was hardly in a position to carry on a prolonged war with Pakistan. Thus there was a practical reason, apart from ideological considerations which compelled Pandit Nehru and his Cabinet colleagues to ask for UN intervention to bring about a cease-fire. Moreover, had a plebiscite taken place at that time there was conviction that it would have gone in favour of India. Obviously this was known to Mr. Jinnah and other Pakistani leaders and they refused to implement the condition, requiring the withdrawal of Pakistani troops and irregulars completely from the territories occupied by them in Jammu and Kashmir. As time went by the Plebiscite idea became even more untenable and irrelevant as thousands of original inhabitants who were supposed to participate in the plebiscite had moved away.

It is rather surprising that M.J. Akbar after describing the scenario during the Simla Summit advocates that, "with Pakistan on its knees India let slip the opportunity to impose if necessary, an unambiguous settlement of the Kashmir problem." While it is true that India had the upper hand over Pakistan after the war, it was hardly possible or desirable for her to attempt to impose a solution unacceptable to Pakistan. It was an act of statesmanship on the part of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to demonstrate to the people of Pakistan that India was more interested in establishing "durable peace" in the subcontinent rather than carrying on a "thousand years war". The fact that despite temporary setbacks there has been no war in the last two decades since signing of the Simla Agreement on 3rd July 1972 vindicates her stand. As to the Kashmir issue it would be an act of madness on the part of either side to try unilaterally to alter the Line of Control as determined on the basis of the respective positions on 17th December 1971. The fact that the US Government has recently declared accordingly, its recognition of the LOC and the bilateral responsibility of India and Pakistan for maintaining peace, is an important step. This shows the correctness of Mrs. Gandhi's approach for preference for long term peace rather thanan imposed solution that certainly would not have stood the test of time.

In *Kashmir—Behind the Vale*, M.J. Akbar has proved once again his position as a front rank writer on contemporary political issues. His penchant for research and analysis of historical facts is combined with the special quality of presenting complex issues in an interesting and readable form.

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Anatomy of a Confrontation*

Sarvepalli Gopal

Secularism is more than laws, concessions and special considerations. It is a state of mind, almost an instinctive feeling, such as existed, by and large, for many centuries in India, when Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and followers of other faiths lived side by side in general harmony, whatever the religions of their rulers, adhering to their own practices but influencing each other in architecture, dress, music, food and even in their religious evolution.

The Ramjanmabhumi issue, the demand by a militant section of Hindu opinion for the demolishing of a mosque in Ayodhya and the building of a temple to Rama on that site, brings into sharper focus than at any time since 1947 a sickness which free India has not been able to shake off and demands reappraisal of many basic features of our society. But the issue itself (as well as the atmosphere in which it thrives) has been, as the essays in this collection show, contrived in recent times and with no historical basis. If, even so, considerable attention is given in this book to claims said to be grounded in history, it is because so much is being made of them in current propaganda. The identification of present-day Ayodhya with Ramjanmabhumi is a matter of faith and not of evidence. There is again no conclusive proof that the mosque, built at the time of Babur, was on a temple site or that a temple had been destroyed to build it. It is true that the mosque incorporates pillars which have non-Islamic motifs; but the explanation for this may well lie in the employment of Hindu craftsmen in the building of mosques or the incorporating of material from any derelict building in the vicinity which could have had a non-religious function or even have been associated with non-Hindu sects. In fact the style of these pillars is thought by some to be more Jaina than Hindu, and it is possible that parts of the mosque may have been picked up from Jaina buildings. Ayodhya had been a Buddhist and then a Jaina centre before followers of the Rama cult started settling there in large numbers in the eighteenth century and building temples under the patronage of the Muslim nawabs of Avadh.

Visitors to Ayodhya, such as Tieffenthaler in the late eighteenth century, have recorded a rather garbled version of a local story that either Babur or Aurangzeb destroyed a temple and constructed a mosque on its site and that this temple had been at the birthplace of Rama — incidentally, one among many with claims to have been located at his birthplace. But, as can be seen from the essays of Sushil Srivastava and K.N. Panikkar, it was only in the nineteenth century that British officials and writers began to give wide circulation and lend authority to the story that on Babur's orders a temple had been destroyed and a mosque built on the site. This fitted in with the British understanding of India. To cite the restrained language of Judith Brown, the British tended to break up the Indian population in terms of community and analysed Indian society as a plural one of different peoples who needed special outlets in political life.[1] These 'imagined religious communities', in Romila Thapar's phrase,[2] were also seen as basically hostile to each other; and the assumption that in Ayodhya a temple had been destroyed and replaced by a mosque was of a piece with this hypothesis. That Muslim rulers in India often acted on non-religious grounds and, like all rulers everywhere, were primarily interested in the maintenance of their political power, was ignored.

As Asghar Ali Engineer's article establishes, no generalizations are possible about Hindu-Muslim relations in our history. There was both conflict and amity between these communities, just as there was hostility between factions and groups within the communities. All such conflicts were limited in their impact and were not, in contrast to today, organized as confrontations between Hindus and Muslims, with repercussions encouraged in many distant parts of the country as well. Babur himself patronized Hindu temples and individuals, and in Ayodhya itself he gave a revenue-free grant of a large piece of land to a Hindu ascetic. Mushirul Hasan outlines the dominant feature of cooperation between the Hindu and Muslim elites as well as masses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the coming of the British, regional imbalances in economic and social development resulted in the classes who gained most from British rule being drawn predominantly from among the Hindus; and Amiya Bagchi's paper shows clearly the economic basis of the phenomenon of communalism. By the time the interior areas of India caught up with Westernization, national consciousness, particularly in Maharashtra but also in Bengal, had begun to speak increasingly in a Hindu idiom. The British, as Aditya Mukherji traces, were not slow to take advantage of the resulting increase in communal rioting. 'One hardly knows,' wrote the Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton, 'what to wish for. Unity of ideas and action would be very dangerous politically, divergence of ideas and collision are administratively troublesome. Of the two the latter is the least risky, though it throws anxiety and responsibility upon those on the spot where the friction exists.'[3]

The policy-makers of the Raj were aware that, despite the social disharmony between the Hindus and the Muslims in India, the real rivalry was economic and that this had been stretched, with their active connivance, to the sphere of politics and public life. As late as 1946 the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who could sometimes in private slip into honesty, acknowledged this. 'Though I agree as to the contrast between the Muslim and Hindu outlook on life and that the masses can be worked on mainly by the appeal of religion, I think that the root of the political conflict, so far as the leaders are concerned, lies in the fear of economic domination, rather than difference of religion. It has been found that Hindus and Muslims can live together without conflict where there is no fear of economic and social domination, e.g. in the army.'[4] But whatever their inner views, the British continued to work on the assumption that India was a plural society divided by religion. According to the imperialist viewpoint, 'the animosities of centuries are always smouldering beneath the surface'.[5] The result was Partition and the formation of Pakistan on the

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groundless basis that Hindus and Muslims formed two separate nations.

In this setting the Muslims who preferred to remain in India rather than migrate to Pakistan were, in Fernand Braudel's words about Frenchmen in 1940, like 'dust blown by the wind from a heap of sand'.[6] The Government of free India, which obviously rejected the two-nation theory, had to strengthen civilized principles of national cohesion. The logical attitude of getting rid of religion altogether was too utopian for Indian society, where many religions were deeply entrenched. So the more practical answer was not opposition to religion but the removal of religion from public affairs, the separation of the State from all faiths, the insistence on religion as a private matter for the individual with no bearing on civic rights and duties, and freedom for the profession of diverse forms of religious worship provided they did not come into conflict with each other. These are all elements of a modern outlook anywhere as well as of, in the third world, the most practical approach. Only secularism of this type, not defined in any dictionary or in accordance with Western experience but adapted to the Indian context, can be the cornerstone of an egalitarian, forward-looking society with religious pluralism, full civil liberties and equal opportunities. It is the only possible social cement for a modern community and the only way of making certain that no one is treated as a second-class citizen on the ground of religion.

These principles of secularism draw their strength from their own logic and appropriateness and need no support from any religion, though it goes without saying that the proclaimed aim of true religion is human fraternity. Even in Islam, often regarded as exclusive, one finds in the Koran the saying, 'Your religion for you and mine for me.' To the person moved by the religious impulse, the ultimate truth is one, every religion shows some traces of it and it is a matter of indifference to which religion one adheres. Only to the person exploiting religion for political ends and using it in various forms of mobilization, as in the case of fundamentalists of any variety, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, is religion seen essentially as a divisive factor, and providing no meeting ground for followers of different faiths. But, considering that the main attack on secular objectives in free India has come from the ranks of Hindu bigotry, it is worth mentioning that the teachings of Hinduism at their best are in full accordance with such secular practices. Hinduism, unlike the Semitic religions, lacks a structure, is not linear, has no single sacred text and is not organized by a church. Even the term Hinduism, although used in the sense of a religion in the fifteenth century, came into common usage only in the nineteenth century. It is a religion without circumference, an amalgamation, under the impact of extraneous influences, of a large variety of religious beliefs with similar structures into a religious system. But while there is no Hindu religion in the sense in which that term is generally used, there is an atmosphere, a structure of feeling, which governs the different sects and lifts them to higher levels. This common element in the faith which binds together those who call themselves Hindus in the various parts of India is the acceptance of religion as spiritual experience, as the direct apprehension of the reality of the one supreme Universal Spirit. Devotion to truth and respect for all human beings, a deepening of inner awareness and a commitment to compassion, form the essence of the Hindu religion.

This lack of dogmatism rules out the certainty of unique revelation and leads to an acceptance of a diversity of beliefs. By its emphasis not on a specific creed but on a common quest for the truth which underlies all doctrines and denominations, Hinduism leaves no room for inter-religious misunderstandings and opens the way for religious concord. Dispensing with rule, ritual and ceremony and instead kindling the inner sense makes possible an intelligent comprehension of the deeper unity of principle among all religions and enables people to respect each other's beliefs. When Shelley wrote of 'bloody Faith the foulest birth of time' he had in mind narrow, exclusive religions seeking domination. But a religion shorn of obscurantism and one which promotes human and ethical values can have a place in a healthy human community.

Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Hindu of our century, described this over seventy years ago, 'Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion, which I certainly prize above all other religions,but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which even purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.'[7] It is a sad irony that those who claim to be followers of the same religion as Gandhi, should now, forsaking the majesty of the faith proclaimed for all time in the Upanishads and in the teachings of the *bhaktas*, be primarily concerned with collecting and transporting bricks in order to construct a temple on the site of a mosque which they plan to demolish. What even a few years ago would have been laughed out as a sick joke on the eccentric fringe of Indian public life has now become a pressing demand. Motivated defiance of the ground rules of historical research and analysis, hijacks and distorts the past to suit the needs of current politics and enrols it under the banner of a narrow ideology.[8] Neeladri Bhattacharya establishes the dangers of such an approach.

It is the good fortune and not the curse of India that she is a land of many religions with a complex and diverse culture. That culture can now, by effort, understanding, and dedication, be expanded into a genuinely democratic culture of an educated people.

That such ideas are no longer a marginal aberration is in a sense testimony to the weakness in practice of secularism in India. The Hindu revivalism which followed the fact of Partition and the memories of inter-religious conflicts could not be wished away by a paper commitment to divorce religion from politics. 'All of us, Nehru wrote sadly seem to be getting infected with the refugee mentality or, worse still, the RSS mentality. That is a curious finale to our careers.'[9] But he realized that this communal feeling, if allowed to spread, would wreck India and destroy its future, and combating it became his prime task. So when, on the night of 22–23 December 1949, some rather primitive images of deities were found in the mosque at Ayodhya, obviously put together hurriedly and proclaimed to be Rama manifesting himself, Nehru immediately recognized the wider implications of this event. Because it would be a dangerous example with bad consequences, he urged the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Govind Ballabh Pant, to interest himself personally in the matter.[10] As A.G. Noorani points out in his article, Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, also wrote to Pant that such unilateral action, suggesting an attitude of aggression and coercion, could not be countenanced. This fact is worth stressing, because Patel is usually depicted as a supporter of Hindu chauvinism; but actually his major concern was national unity. Though Pant replied that efforts were being made to set things right in a peaceful manner, nothing happened. Concerned at this apathy in a matter of such grave importance with repercussions on all-India affairs and more especially Kashmir, at a time when a rapid increase of migration of Hindus from East Bengal was causing panic among Muslims in Calcutta and a mounting war fever in Pakistan, Nehru offered, if necessary, to go himself to Ayodhya. Pant, assuring the Prime Minister that some local officials had

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been replaced and stating that he was hopeful that a satisfactory solution could be found and the idols removed peacefully, dissuaded Nehru from proceeding to Ayodhya.[11] But far from a solution being found to the problem in Ayodhya, the situation in the whole province, as Nehru saw, deteriorated. 'I have felt for a long time that the whole atmosphere of the UP has been changing for the worst from the communal point of view. Indeed, the UP is becoming almost a foreign land for me. I do not fit in there.... All that occurred in Ayodhya in regard to the mosque and temples and the hotel in Fyzabad[12] was bad enough. But the worst feature of it was such things should take place and be approved by some of our own people and that they should continue.'[13]

So strongly did Nehru feel on this matter of the communal disease spreading in UP and all over India that he considered at one stage leaving all else and taking up with all his strength a crusade to combat communalism. But at the time all he could do was to remind his colleagues of their old ideals and urge them to act. Finding Pant immune to his pleadings, he turned to Lal Bahadur Shastri, at that time Home Minister in UP. The matter of the idols in the mosque had by now become a major issue affecting India's whole policy and prestige; and Nehru once more reiterated his concern that conditions in Ayodhya were becoming steadily worse and spreading to Mathura and other places, with the Congress organization taking no interest and some prominent Congressmen being openly communal. 'I fear that we are heading again for some kind of disaster.'[14] But still no action followed; and indeed the multifold and intensifying consequences of official impassivity and weakness in Ayodhya are with us still. 'The fact of the matter is that for all our boasts, we have shown ourselves a backward people, totally lacking in the elements of culture as any country understands them. It is only those who lack all understanding of culture, who talk so much about it.'[15] A scathing indictment which seems to gain validity as the years pass since Nehru first made it over forty years ago. Our media today is replete with myth wearing the mask of history and myth carefully chosen, as Romila Thapar shows, to project particular obscurantist versions that help to glorify aggressive fundamentalism. The television version of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and, in sharp contrast, the failure to present a serious and non-partisan discussion of the Ramjanmabhumi issue, have all contributed to the heightened excitement which has led to the recent increase in communal rioting, with over a thousand Muslims killed in the last few months.

> **Today attention is centred on a mosque; tomorrow agitation may develop over a temple. It is established that some Buddhist and Jaina shrines were destroyed by Hindus. How far back in history does one go, correcting the past as interpreted to one's own liking?**

Unqualifiedly committed as Nehru was to the principles of secularism, a hesitancy on his own part in enforcing them has helped to weaken their impact. In 1948 he committed the support of the Government to a resolution of the Constituent Assembly calling for the ban of communal political parties, but did not implement the resolution because of legal difficulties. He, like Gandhi, was opposed to the banning of cow-slaughter as an unnecessary and irrational concession to Hindu feeling but permitted it to be included as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, while ensuring that nothing came of it in practice. Above all, in his keenness to win the confidence of the Muslims whose feelings were still raw after the events of Partition, Nehru failed to provide equality before the law to all Indian women and to promulgate a common civil law. But there is no room in a society which declares itself to be secular for inequalities which claim religious sanction. Secularism is more than a passive attitude of religious tolerance; it is a positive concept of equality in all spheres. Religion has to be separated not only from politics but also from the law. To deny rights to Muslim women which are available to Indian women of other faiths is a violation of the provision in the Constitution that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion. Indeed the Constituent Assembly had, by a resolution in 1948, refused to accept that Muslim personal law was an inseparable part of the Islamic religion and rejected attempts to exempt it from the Directive Principle regarding a uniform civil code.

All this was, of course, known to Nehru; but he felt that, at least in the early years of free India, minorities required special consideration. There might still be a few Muslims who were communal and any efforts of theirs to make mischief would have to be dealt with sternly; but more attention should be given to winning the Muslims over and making them feel at home. He was throughout, before and after 1947, of the view that the problem of minorities was basically one for the majority community to handle. The test of success was not what the Hindus thought but how the Muslims and other communities felt, just as, while minorities might turn communal out of a sense of grievance, communalism of the majority community was dangerous and, masquerading as nationalism, was in fact a form of Fascism. There could sometimes be justification for the minorities to be communal; there was none for the majority. 'Honest communalism is fear; false communalism is political reaction.'[16] That Nehru even in the thirties drew a distinction between shades of communalism and considered one of it to be legitimate, weakened the logic of his secularism and opened the door to explosive possibilities. But he was right in the general drift of his thinking that the eradication of the communal virus is a problem of social psychology. It is for the Hindus to be secular and thereby help the minorities to become secular. For it is the majority community alone that can provide the sense of security.

Whatever the innate tendencies of communities identifying themselves as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs and the natural drift of their religions, extraneous influences have, in the years after Nehru and particularly in recent times, sought to push the majority community in the reverse direction. Successive governments, of whatever ideological complexion, have helped in this. Even the Congress when in office has not been consistent in its loyalty to Nehru's principles. In its keenness to ensure votes, it has been willing to compromise on secularism. This has sometimes brought short-term advantages, but in the long run has strengthened communal forces. These have also gained from other developments; Hindu chauvinism is an unsurprising counter to the Islamic fundamentalism that is spreading in India and various other parts of the world. Seeking to confront throw-backs to medievalism by modern, secular attitudes is a difficult endeavour; far easier to take up similar, backward-looking postures in dealing with the menace. Also, just as the Jews were denounced in Nazi Germany as a threat to the economic prosperity of the nation as a whole, so in India Muslims are today being made the scapegoats of impending decline, particularly of retail and small-scale business, in the Indian countryside. In the riots in Kota in September 1989, those killed were mostly the Muslims who had been once poor but now roused envy because they had been enriched by money from the Gulf. Tamil Nadu has been relatively free of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims; but this record was tarnished by communal rioting in Madras city in September 1990, and it is said that Marwari traders rewarded the hooligans who burnt shops owned by Muslims. In the clashes in the Bhagalpur area in October 1990, not a single Muslim weaver family was spared in the Champanagar and Nathnagar localities, famous for their silk textile production. Nor is it without significance that many of the disputed religious sites constitute valuable urban

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property. The craving for plunder has not departed with Mahmud of Ghazni.

Such economic greed, rivalry and exploitation draw sustenance from other sources as well. Fundamentalism is an umbrella providing shade to smuggling, drug-peddling and other dubious anti-social activities. Indians settled abroad clinging to obscurantist versions of their religion in an effort to salvage their identity in an alien context, have thrown their weight—and funds—on the side of reaction in their home country. The latest instance is their massive vote for L.K. Advani, the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, in the poll conducted by the BBC in London for selecting the Man of the Year.

All these trends have been assiduously exploited by the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)in their campaign for political mobilization of the masses. Active in this regard especially during the last two to three years, their efforts acquired a note of urgency in recent months after the National Front Government's adoption of the report of the Mandal Commission, recommending reservation of some official jobs for the backward classes. The attention given to divisions of caste within the Hindu fold threatened to weaken the objective of pitting the Hindus as a bloc against the Muslims and led to an intensification of the mobilizing campaign. Making the Ayodhya issue a hard and easily understandable focus of their activity, calling on all devout Hindus to carry bricks from various parts of India to Ayodhya for constructing a temple, recruiting the services of sadhus and swamis, organizing a *rath-yatra* with fanfare across the long stretches of northern India with violence and bloodshed in its wake, carrying out periodic attacks on the mosque and parading through the villages of India what are claimed to be the ashes of those killed by the police are methods of which Goebbels would have been proud. And the results are plain to see. In the general elections of 1952 the Jan Sangh secured no more than three per cent of the vote and its lone member in the Lok Sabha was Syama Prasad Mukherjee, a front-bench parliamentarian who would have done credit to any party; in the elections of 1989 the vote secured by the BJP is estimated to be anywhere between eleven and fifteen per cent, and it has in the Lok Sabha eighty-six members which makes clear that numbers are now more important than quality. Today the Party is mounting what it hopes will be the final assault, leading to the acquisition of State power at the Centre. We are living in times which may well witness secularism in its last throes.

Secularism is more than laws, concessions and special considerations. It is a state of mind almost an instinctive feeling, such as existed by and large for many centuries in India when Hindus, Muslims Christians, Parsis and followers of other faiths lived side by side in general harmony, whatever the religions of their rulers, adhering to their own practices but influencing each other in architecture, dress music, food and even in their religious evolution. During the last hundred to hundred-and-fifty years, fissures, stress-cracks and structural fatigue have developed in the edifice of Indian civilization; but these can be surmounted with the impetus of democracy and the spread of education. A secular state can be strongly grounded only in a secular society and this implies leading the people out of social backwardness into forward-looking egalitarianism If secular attitudes are confined to a few sophisticated elements in our society, then even those few will feel as they are beginning to do today, beleaguered, with fundamentalism spawning round them and weakening the national identity. Only by the strengthening of the human factor at all levels in India can the communalism both of fear and of reaction be overcome. Only by not living in a world of self-created myth but by facing the past with honesty, can we move beyond the tragedies which the corroding disease of communalism brings and face the future with confidence. It is the good fortune and not the curse of India that she is a land of many religions with a complex and diverse culture. That culture can now by effort, understanding, and dedication, be expanded into a genuinely democratic culture of an educated people. Such an invigorating process, rather than the destruction of mosques and the construction of temples in their place, would be more in line with the heritage of the Indian people which always, over the centuries, flowed freely beyond its natural confines, looked for wider connections and linked the apparently separate.

Basically it is irrelevant whether a temple had or had not existed on the site where the mosque now stands. India cannot revert to the approaches of medieval politics and set about destroying, under any circumstances, existing or erstwhile structures of worship. That such demolitions had taken place in the past offers no justification for such vandalism now. Today attention is centred on a mosque; tomorrow agitation may develop over a temple. It is established that some Buddhist and Jaina shrines were destroyed by Hindus. How far back in history does one go correcting the past as interpreted to one's own liking?

It is pointless for religious leaders to exchange and assess what they regard as evidence, as it is to make a reference to the Supreme Court to pronounce on the validity of such data. But a correct understanding of the present confrontation could help to clear the atmosphere and facilitate the obvious solution of leaving things as they are. The essays in this volume are intended as contributions towards such an understanding.

—*Introduction:* Anatomy of a Confrontation

NOTES

1. Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi, Prisoner of Hope*, Oxford University Press: Delhi 1990, p. 374.
2. Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies* May 1989, pp. 209-31.
3. Lord George Hamilton to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, Hamilton Correspondence, India Office Library, C125/2, 7 May 1897 folios 185 ff.
4. Lord Wavell to Sir A. Clow, *Transfer of Power*, vol. 8, Document 414, 7 October 1946.
5. Francis Younghusband in 1930 quoted in, G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1990, p. 44.
6. Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France*, vol. 1, Collins: London, 1988, p. 24.
7. *Young India*, 12 May 1920; *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 17, Publications Division: Delhi, 1965, p. 406.
8. The latest example is Koenraad Elstt's *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid*, Delhi, 1990. Here a Catholic practitioner of polemics fights the crusades all over again on the soil of India and the progress in rational thought and logical analysis in historical debate during the eight hundred years in between has obviously passed him by. It is difficult to take seriously an author who draws his historical evidence from newspaper reports and speaks of the centuries when there were Muslim rulers in India as 'a blood-soaked catastrophe .
9. Nehru to Mohanlal Saxena, 10 September 1949 Nehru papers.
10. Nehru's telegram to G.B. Pant, 26 December 1949.
11. Nehru to Pant, 5 February 1950 and Pant's reply 9 February 1950, Nehru papers.
12. A Muslim owning a hotel in Faizabad was ordered to vacate it by the local authorities and the next day some Hindus took possession of it. Later the order was withdrawn but the Muslim owner did not get back his hotel; he was allotted other premises.
13. Nehru to Pant, 17 April 1950, Nehru papers.
14. Nehru to Lal Bahadur Shastri, 9 July 1950, Nehru papers.
15. Nehru or Pant, 17 April 1950, Nehru papers.
16. 27 November 1933. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, first series, vol. 6 Orient Longman: Delhi, 1974, p. 164.

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OF HUNGER AND ETHICS

T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan

HUNGER AND PUBLIC ACTION
by Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen
Oxford University Press. 1990 pp. 373, Rs. 275.00

ON ETHICS AND ECONOMICS
By Amartya Sen
Oxford University Press 1990 pp. 132, Rs. 60.00

This very long book, *Hunger and Public Action*, says very little that is not already known, or at least felt by all thinking persons. This is not to say either that it is a bad book (bad being understood in the normal, amoral sense of the word) or that if it had not been written, Pareto optimality would have been satisfied (no one would have been worse off, and quite possibly someone, if only this reviewer, would have been better off). It is just that in spite of all the intellectual froth, which bubbles up, and around, in impressive quantities, the conclusions are at least trite, if not trivial. That Amartya Sen who has increasingly become to economics what L. Subramaniam is to carnatic music should have co-authored it, only makes matters worse.

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The question the author poses is: who has done better, India or China? They come to the unambiguous conclusion that it is China which has outdone India in the matter of doing something' about hunger, longevity, health and other indicators of a good, if also austere, life.

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T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan is assistant editor, Economic Times New Delhi.

Hunger is a terrible thing, say the authors, which is absolutely right, and add that someone or everyone should do something about it. That too, is absolutely right. But what then? Having made an impeccable moral judgement about hunger and having prescribed an impeccable moral course of action (do something, anything) they seem to have shot their bolt. That perhaps explains why they have gone to such lengths, all of 277 pages, to justify something that would need justification only in Krypton, which was the mirror-image of earth. The predominantly western readership to which the book is presumably addressed perhaps needs such an exposition. In India, where we are rather better at understanding these things, the effort seems rather contrived.

The contrivance aspect is specially in evidence in respect of the entitlements' concept which was first developed by Mr. Sen about a decade ago. At its core, the concept, if one ought to call it that, simply says that what people get to eat depends on what they are entitled to eat—it is just that for one reason or another, economic or social, the entitlements differ. So as between a rich and a poor person, the entitlement would be a function of how much money each has (the more money someone has, the higher is his entitlement). As between the male head of a family and the lady of the house (or hut, if you will), it would depend on precisely that, i.e. the former would, by convention or tradition, get more, while the latter could, if there were too many other claimants, get nothing at all.

The first category of entitlements is clearly in the economic domain, inasmuch as it is determined by economic factors such as relative differences in purchasing power. Doing something' about it obviously involves a combination of action by the State and socially sponsored projects, which would either attack the problem directly (food kitchens?) or indirectly (food-for-work, eg the employment guarantee scheme in Maharashtra). It is worth noting here though, that in the long run, State action and voluntary social action are mutually exclusive. In India, there was a time when a great deal used to be achieved by voluntary action; today, with the all-pervasive presence of the State, everyone simply waits for the sarkar to do something. Equally it is only when the State fails to act that social action is forthcoming. Achieving the right mix is of the essence, and who knows, there might even be a book there.

The other category of entitlements, the one that is determined by the person s status in the family is, equally obviously, purely social. Gender (what would have happened if there were more than two sexes?) is important, because as Mr. Sen has pointed out in another book, how much you get to eat depends not on how hungry you are but on the sex to which you belong. No prizes for guessing who gets more, of course, which is rather rough on the females of the family. But there it is, and should (or can) something be done about it?

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A major plank of his argument is that Adam Smith has been misrepresented by those who have chosen to focus only on the invisible hand aspect of his work. Self-interest, says Mr. Sen, may have been central to his overall thesis, but it by no means meant that the professor of moral philosophy, no less, was oblivious to the ethical considerations that ought to govern human relations. On the contrary, says Sen, Adam Smith gave due importance to ethics in his work.

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Clearly the problem exists only amongst poor families, because if there were enough to go around, no one would need to give up (voluntarily if you are a mother, under duress if you are a sister, and resentfully if you are a wife) anything. But this is a very tricky can of worms, and the authors have refused to get drawn into opening it too widely. They can't be blamed for that.

Is there nothing interesting about the book, then, at least for the Indian reader? There is actu-

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ally, and it is a rather interesting comparison between India and China. The question the author poses is: who has done better, India or China? They come to the unambiguous conclusion that it is China which has outdone India in the matter of doing 'something about hunger, longevity, health and other indicators of a good, if also austere, life.

But that is not the end of the story. It turns out that India has managed famines rather better than China because India has a vibrant democracy and adversial journalism (at least someone has something nice to say about such journalism) while China only has the Communist party. Lest this detract from the main point of the book, however, the authors hasten to point out that even if more people are likely to die in a famine in China than in India, in non-famine years, the reverse is true. The figures they quote certainly support this. So what? Public action, naturally.

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Citing the example of Burudin's ass, which stood half-way between two piles of hay and died of starvation because it could not decide which to eat first, Mr. Sen says that if the ass had, in fact, chosen one pile in preference to the other, it would have done so in spite of not having enough reasons to choose it. After all, each pile was equidistant, and therefore, there would never be enough reason to prefer one pile to the other.

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And so on and on. At the end, the reader is perfectly entitled to ask: Am I any the wiser or better informed after reading this book? The answer, alas, is a resounding no. This is the central weakness of the book.

The second book, shorter, crisper, and most importantly, cheaper, is an altogether better read. It is actually an updated and edited version of a series of three lectures that Mr. Sen delivered at the University of California at Berkeley. It asks a rather basic question: Does ethics have any place in economics, and concludes that indeed it does. The book is devoted to proving this, and the sheer depth, width and extent of Mr. Sen's learning (the bibliography is 32 pages long) leaves the reader stupefied.

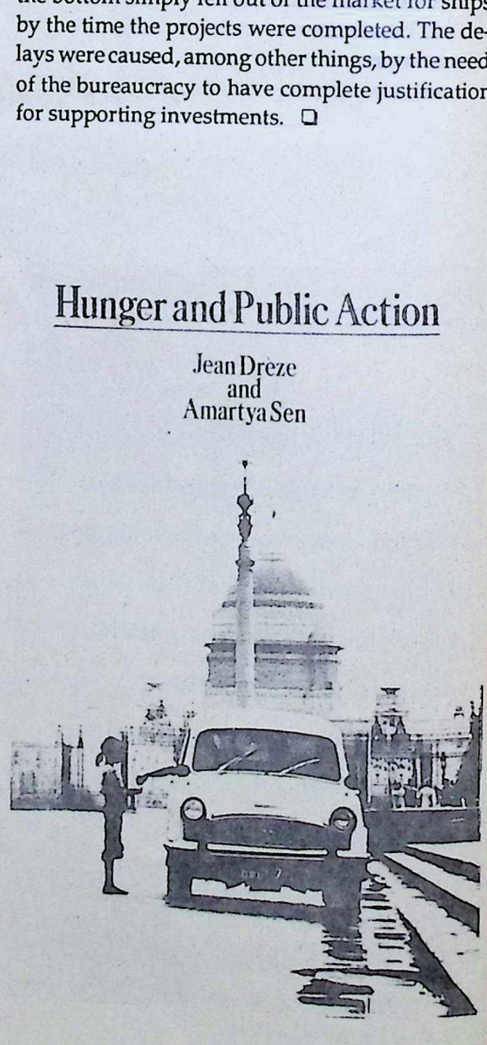
A major plank of his argument is that Adam Smith has been misrepresented by those who have chosen to focus only on the invisible hand aspect of his work. Self-interest, says Mr. Sen, may have been central to his overall thesis, but it by no means meant that the professor of moral philosophy, no less, was oblivious to the ethical considerations that ought to govern human relations. On the contrary, says Sen, Adam Smith gave due importance to ethics in his work.

One cannot help, feeling though, that the ethic bit can be overdone, specially in a democracy in which a large number of the voters are very poor. For example, it is obviously ethical to effect income transfers from the rich to the poor in such societies. Equally obviously, it is also in the self-interest of the politicians to do so. But realizing this is not enough, because the means used to reach the ends are very important. Thus, how ethical is it to tax a refrigerator in India out of the reach of the lower middle class (whose need to preserve food in the hot climate is great) in order to finance a poverty relief programe? Superficially, this looks like a standard Pareto problem (some people have been made better off at the expense of some others, and therefore the action is not Pareto optimal) but a little reflection ought to show that it is not merely a question of comparing interpersonal utilities. The means used to effect the income transfer introduce distortions in the market for refrigerators, or more generally, if all electrical appliances are treated as luxuries, in the market for all electrical appliances. If these distortions work against the rural poor over the long run, which they tend to do by restricting the growth of the appliance industry, and thus employment outside agriculture, how 'ethical' is it to effect transfers in quite this manner? Or, how ethical is it to treat electrical goods as 'luxuries, and therefore available for severe taxation, while regarding electricity itself as virtually a free public good in a capital-deficient country? Short-term ethical considerations (the right of the poor to electricity is equal to that of the rich) lead to cheap electricity but the long term costs are high inflation via the budget deficit, the costs of which are borne by the poor, the beneficiaries of cheap electricity.

Be that as it may, Mr. Sen makes an extremely important point about the need for public action to be fully justified, as opposed to only partially, justified. Citing the example of Burudin's ass, which stood half-way between two piles of hay and died of starvation because it could not decide which to eat first, Mr. Sen says that if the ass had, in fact, chosen one pile in preference to the other, it would have done so in spite of not having enough reasons to choose it. After all, each pile was equidistant, and therefore, there would never be enough reason to prefer one pile to the other.

This has important implications for public policy, specially in India where the various parliamentary committees usually seek complete justification from the government for having followed one course of action rather than the other. If only the MPs would understand that as between two equally attractive proposals, the choice of one can never be fully justified, a great deal of administrative delay, fabrication and bungling would not take place.

Clearly, information plays an important role here because suppose the pile that the ass chose was poisoned, and the ass didn't know it, it would wind up very ill, or even dead. Distance alone could not then be enough as a criterion. Similarly, governments usually don't have a clue about the likely pattern of demand in the future, which is why the chances of their going wrong are never lower than the chances of their getting it right. The setting up of heavy plate making capacity in the late 1960s and early 1970s testifies to this. The idea was to become a major shipbuilding nation, but the bottom simply fell out of the market for ships by the time the projects were completed. The delays were caused, among other things, by the need of the bureaucracy to have complete justification for supporting investments. ❑



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Emergence of Super-Merchants

Alok Sheel

MERCHANTS, MARKETS AND THE STATE IN EARLY MODERN INDIA

Edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Oxford University Press, pp. viii+276, 1990, Rs. 190.00

The familiar view of the eighteenth century as one of general decline, following the breakup of the Mughal Empire, was challenged some years ago by Christopher Bayly, who tried to rectify the picture of economic collapse attributed to war and chaos in the eighteenth century. He argued, in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, that the so-called 'Black Century' saw the redeployment of merchant capital within India, not its destruction.

The concluding essay in the present volume, jointly authored by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher Bayly, apparently carries forward this line of argument. The sixteenth century saw the emergence of super-merchants, labelled as 'portfolio capitalists' because they meddled in several spheres—revenue farming, local agricultural trade, commanded military resources, and even dabbled in the great game of Indian Ocean Commerce. Although portfolio capitalists flourished in the South, elements of portfolio capitalism could be seen in North India, which had bigger merchants and bankers, like the house of Jagat Seth, the Benares Agarwals, and the Kashmiri Mul. These great merchant families actually increased their importance over the first half of the eighteenth century, partly as a result of the disintegration of the Mughal system, and partly as a result of new opportunities afforded by the entry of European seaborne trade in India.

In the process, the nature of commercialization in medieval India is questioned, and its origins are also antedated. In his essay on the Portuguese rice trade in the Port of Basrur, 1600-50, Sanjay Subrahmanyam shows that between 3.5 to 4.5 million kilograms of rice was exported annually from Basrur to Portuguese destinations such as Goa, Malacca, Muscat, Mozambique and Mombassa. We are also reminded that Basrur was only one of the many rice trading ports along the Kanara coast. Much of this trade was contracted through local merchants, the prosperous 'Chatins', who dominated Basrur and enjoyed a good deal of autonomy from imperial authority at the time of Vijayanagar.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam contends that since the region was not harshly taxed, production for the market took place quite independently of the exigencies of 'forced commercialization'. This refrain is picked up by David Ludden in his essay based on the 1823 Tirunelveli census. It would be too simplistic to see commodity circulation in pre-British India as entirely dependent on the system of state-enforced 'agrarian capitalism'. The works of several scholars relating to expanding craft production, capital accumulation, labour specialization and product diversification in pre-British India are cited to buttress the argument which challenges some of the basic premises of Irfan Habib's medieval classic, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*. The logical corollary of this is to antedate the emergence of the 'rich peasant' producing for the market well before the nineteenth century.

There are two excellent essays on indigenous textile production in the volume—one by Joseph J. Brennig on late seventeenth century Coromandel, and the other by S. Arasaratnam on south-eastern India in the second half of the eighteenth century. After supplying relatively stable markets in southeast Asia for centuries, the cotton textile industry of the Coromandel found a new market for its calicos in Europe. The Coromandel industry was fed by huge imports of raw cotton from the black soil districts of central deccan, which were transported by Banjaras in huge caravans which could comprise as many as 40,000 bullocks.

Brennig and Arasaratnam have also given us interesting vignettes of life in weavers' villages—their income levels, their economic differentiation, the role of head weavers and merchants, and their ability to vote with their feet when the going got too oppressive.

The arrival of European trading companies, and consequent expansion in demand, benefitted both weavers and merchants. However, as the East India Company established its monopoly and political hegemony, Indian merchants were eliminated by the company s agents, and the weaver was coerced to operate in a harsh monopolistic environment. His real income diminished as grain prices went up.

The relationship between the commodity producer and the merchant has been explored in some depth. The picture that emerges suggests that weavers of the Coromandel possessed the capacity to resist merchant demands; and the latter did not command such control over production as they did in the early stages of capitalism in Europe through the 'putting out' system.

The weavers opposed the elimination of brokers and merchants by the East India Company because the former gave weavers great flexibility in their operations, providing vital credit which extended beyond the needs of the manufacturing process. The merchant looked after the needs of the weaver family in times of sickness, robbery, fire famine, etc. He was a friend and a patron in addition to being a merchant. This contrasted with the harshness of the methods used by the company's servants, who stormed weavers' houses at the slightest conflict. Although the resistance of weavers was gradually worn down, their hostility, impoverishment and tendency to flee enmasse were already adversely affecting the indigenous cotton textile industry as the eighteenth century opened.

As the Company established its political hegemony and monopoly over lucrative export items like cotton textiles and opium (Om Prakash has analyzed the opium trade in India and Indonesia in comparative perspective), indigenous merchants suffered and were marginalized in the grain trade in which the British rarely evinced interest, except for a brief—and abortive—attempt towards the end of the eighteenth century, described by Kum Kum Bannerjee. Madhavi Bejakal suggests, on the basis of evidence gathered from eighteenth century eastern Rajasthan, that while the State in medieval India was the major player in the grain market as it had to perforce sell a substantial proportion of the produce collected in kind as revenue, it never sought to displace merchants. While compelling them to purchase grain stocks, it nevertheless allowed for a margin of profit, as the trading community could otherwise resort to collective refusal to trade, which was ofcourse disastrous. The Company's attempt to directly participate in the grain trade was hastily abandoned as it resulted in huge losses.

The hierarchy of trading structures which provided the conduits through which grain moved from the production zones to 'hats', market-towns and points of export are now fairly well delineated in the historiography on the subject. At the very base of the structure was the grihasta-bepari. The baladiya occupied the middle-tier, and he was financed by the mahajan residing in big towns to buy and fetch grain on pack-bullocks.

In the eighteenth century, where roads were 'kachcha' and vulnerable to predatory groups, water was the most favoured mode of transport,

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and major markets consequently tended to cluster on the banks of rivers and watercourses. Since most rivers were navigable only for 3-4 months in a year, from July onwards, most of the transportation of grain from the countryside took place during this time.

The symbiotic relationship between merchants and political authority most notably local zamindars, has been underscored by the essayists. The rise and subsequent decline of Burhanpur has been meticulously reconstructed by Stewart Gordon. Cotton textiles, opium and tobacco were transported to the port of Surat via Burhanpur, along well-defined Mughal roads. The Mughals provided necessary protection to this trade route, as did the Marathas later. Far from disrupting commerce, the Marathas in fact competed for traders and tried to attract them by offering lower transit duties. The Marathas, however, had less resources than the Mughal State, and could not effectively protect the trade route and its hinterland, as a result of which Burhanpur never recovered. The new channels of trade and communications developed by the British, the metalled roads and railways, bypassed the old city of Burhanpur.

Rural markets also owed their origin and continuance to the support of zamindars, ijaradars and revenue officials, and it was for this reason traders voluntarily continued to pay various types of 'sayer' to their patrons long after the British abolished all such taxes.

Rajat Datta has focussed on the merchant-peasant interface in the grain trade, and emphasizes the 'underdog' position of the latter. The three essays on the grain trade in the volume purport to set right the relative neglect of the local grain trade in earlier studies, which had focussed mainly on long distance trade and trade in luxury or export commodities.

In the ultimate analysis, the picture which emerges from this volume on merchants, markets and the State in early modern India is that while the arrival of European trading companies gave an initial fillip to indigenous commodity production and merchant capital, the eventual hegemony of the British tended to strangulate both, long before the ascendancy of the Manchester School. The nascent 'Portfolio Capitalists' were nipped in the bud. The 'Black Century', then, was occasioned not by the passing of an empire, but perhaps by the dawn of another.

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This is of course a rather simplistic rendering of the rich, complex historical detail woven into this absorbing volume. The editor, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, must be complimented for bringing together some fine recent and ongoing research into the eighteenth century in one volume of exceptionally high scholarship. The only weakness in this otherwise well edited work perhaps lies in the hastily written introduction, which could possibly have articulated a more holistic picture of the eighteenth century as evident in the essays contained in this volume. Instead, we are presented with theoretical issues deriving from the works of John Hicks, Karl Polanyii, Robert Frenner, et al, which are not addressed at all by any of the individual contributors. The publishers could also have taken as much pains in ensuring quality binding as they have obviously taken in eliminating typographical errors. ❑

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Metaphors of Emotion

Patricia Oberoi

DIVINE PASSIONS: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTION IN INDIA

Edited by Owen M. Lynch

Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 312, Rs. 225.00

The writing of a blurb is obviously an adventitious affair: it may be the author's; it may be the editor's; or it may be the work of several hands. But a blurb can be instructive nonetheless for, howsoever it comes into being, it does assume a certain authority in the self-representation of the work. I once purchased a book which, by some freak effect, had the word "Blurb" in italics on an otherwise blank first page, an invitation, it seemed, to compose one's own. The effect was disconcerting, to say the least, and neither I nor subsequent readers of the book dared to fill in the blank.

The blurb of this book, *Divine Passions*, invites readers—the Western reader quite clearly—to share in the emotional lives of Indians as disclosed through thick-descriptive ethnographies, and thereby to correct some resilient Western stereotypes of Indian emotional experience. In place of "yogis lying on a bed of nails in search of detachment from all feeling, white-bearded gurus preaching meditation on the transcendental, close-knit families in which the aged and infirm live out their days happy and secure in the loving devotion of their children, and ritualists worshipping more by rote than by heartfelt devotion" (p. 3), we are offered here, according to the blurb,

> colourful and emotionally alive pictures of India: ecstatic religious devotees rolling in temple dust; elders worrying about neglect and mistreatment by family members; priests pursuing lusty, carefree idea of the good life; and jokers reviling one another with bawdy insults at marriages. Drawing on rich ethnographic data from emotion-charged scenarios, these essays question western academic theories of emotions, physiological sensations, and an individual's private feelings. Presenting an alternative view of emotions as culturally constructed, and as morally evaluative concepts grounded in the bodily self, the contributors to *Divine Passions* help dispel some of the west's persistent misconceptions of Indian emotional experience.

One senses in this statement, opaque as it is in parts, a certain tension between the assertion of the viability of "cultural translation", which is after all what this book is all about, and a commitment to a culturally particularistic social constructivist perspective which denies the universality of human emotions. These essays", says Owen Lynch in his explanatory introduction, "reject empathy as a naive and ethnocentric practice, a form of Western imperialism over the emotions of the Other. The essays begin, not with the assumption underlying empathy that emotions are sensations and, therefore, universally experienced in the same way, but with the unifying assumption that emotions are fundamentally culturally constructed appraisals telling people what they feel—experience" (p. 17).

Similarly the book discloses an uncomfortable ambivalence between the humanistic empathy that so often characterizes the personal relationships of anthropologists in the field and that in effect must underlie the aspiration to cultural translation and, notwithstanding the disclaimer just quoted, the *objectivising* project of the discipline of Anthropology as the study of the Other, albeit as a mode of reflection on the Self: "When Americans probe deeper into their own culture of emotion they will be better able to understand and translate into their own language and culture the emotional lives of an Other. Paradoxically, one way to do that is to look at the emotional lives of Others" (p. 16) .... The problem is that without establishing the essential otherness of the Other, the project tends to lose its *raison d'etre* and clarity of purpose.

The nine ethnographic essays of *Divine Passions* are a subset out of nineteen presented at a conference on "The anthropology of feeling, experience and emotion in India" held at the University of Houston in 1985 as part of the Festival of India in the United States. The papers were selected, as editor Owen Lynch tells us, "because they most directly addressed the conference's theme" (p. ix). In the process, however, what was originally posited as a *dialogue* between Indian and Western social scientists, presided over by sociologist M.N. Srinivas, "honoured senior participant and guru providing much pertinent, sage and witty comment" (p. ix), was converted into a *monologic* discourse on the ultimate otherness of the emotional lives of Indians: all nine contributors here are non-Indians. I would submit that the absence of the voices of Indian social scientists in this volume is in fact a structural necessity, given the basic assumptions underlying the project. There seems no space for a further and complicating mediation between Self and Other, Us and Them. The native anthropologist, neither Self nor Other, would only confuse the process of cultural translation.

Look at it another way.

> "The essays begin, not with the assumption underlying empathy that emotions are sensations and, therefore, universally experienced in the same way, but with the unifying assumption that emotions are fundamentally culturally constructed appraisals telling people what they feel—experience"

From a Western (or should one specify WASP?) perspective, "ecstatic religious devotees rolling in temple dust" is surely an image that competes in exoticism with that of the yogi on his bed of nails, or the white bearded guru meditating on the transcendental; lusty (*mast*-y) priests are as unnerving a religious phenomenon as is obsessive ritualism; and, as Sylvia Vatuk's paper on the dilemmas of aging in India argues, the anxiety of the elderly in India is foreign to a Western audience to the extent that it is founded on cultural assumptions quite different from those that underly the superficially similar feelings of the aged in the West. (ch. 2).

Again, the blurb's invocation of "emotion-charged scenarios" suggests not just emotion but a degree of *emotionalism* that many would see as antithetical to rational modernity, just as ecstatic religious experience is regarded as a thing of the past, or of other classes, peoples and places—something the reader could not be expected to intuitively comprehend without the mediation of the anthropologist-interpreter. Hence perhaps, the title—"*Divine passions*"—for more than half of the papers deal with the social construction of emotion in the context of religious belief, especially Krishna worship. This, in and of itself, may be exoticism for the book's intended audience.

The issue is in fact neatly illustrated in the two papers in the volume that deal explicitly with the emotional dilemmas of Western converts to Indian religions. In one of them, Verne Dusenbery analyses the contrasting attitudes of Gora Sikhs (white Sikh converts to Harbhajan Singh Yogi's

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3HO sect) and Sikhs of Indian extraction on the questions of Operation Bluestar and the assassination of Indira Gandhi. For the pietist Gora Sikhs, Operation Bluestar was undoubtedly a desecration. But it could not be construed as an insult to honour individual and collective, demanding revenge. Thus several Gora Sikhs publicly condemned the assassination of Indira Gandhi while the rest of the community appeared sullen, vindicated, or even triumphant. For the immigrant Sikhs, however, religious identity was inextricably linked with Punjabi Jat notions of *izzat* or honour and the culture of the feud, insult meriting revenge. Conversely, the Punjabi Sikhs often censured the conduct of Gora Sikhs who, in their construction, had sometimes acted in ways derogatory to family or community honour, even if in the cause of their faith. The Punjabi Sikhs' obsession with izzat, in religion as in secular life, was something the Gora Sikhs could neither understand nor appreciate.

A second instance of cultural asymmetry in the context of religion is detailed in Charles Brooks' paper on the Hare Krishna (ISKON) sect's community in Brindaban. Recruiting its followers especially in the West, the sect actively disapproved of overly ecstatic devotionalism in Krishna worship and the manifest eroticism of the Radhe-Shyam model of worshipful love (mādhurya-rasa): the sight of a European devotee rolling in ecstasy in the dust of the temple courtyard was quite repulsive to them. But Brooks' paper also instances how, in this delicate cross-cultural situation, suspicion may be transcended: the Hare Krishna devotee allows himself to experience mystical identification with Radha, while the holy man acknowledges the authenticity of this experience as evidence that not all foreigners are bad. And so on.

Owen Lynch's undoubtedly competent and useful introduction to the "Antrhropology of the emotions" and his reasoned defence of the social constructionist position provokes a further misgiving. Clearly this is an up-and-coming "in-thing" area in metropolitan anthropology since Michelle Rosaldo's seminal monograph *Knowledge and power: Ilongot notions of self and and social life* (Cambridge University Press, and other papers, 1980), and it has already begun to generate a state-of-the-art review literature and other exemplary studies in different ethnographic areas. By now there is almost a compulsion to produce South Asian case studies to match! (One wonders, cynically, whether the Indian contributors to the conference were not quite "with it" enough to make the book!)

But this would be an uncharitable position to take. For one thing, it could be argued that a social constructionist perspective on the emotions has always been a component in the repertoire of classical anthropology—think of Malinowski's description of the Trobriand Islanders' passion for their *kula* exchange. Secondly, the individual papers collected here are for the most part excellent examples of ethnographic writing, whether or not they conform explicitly to the theoretical principles that Lynch has outlined. One should also add that explicit focus on the anthropology of the emotions has encouraged the exploration of several worthwhile but relatively neglected areas of experience.

Thus we have a sensitive and self-reflexive paper by Margaret Trawick analysing the Tamil ideology of "love"—*anbu*.

> I brought with me to Tamil Nadu my own, deeply ingrained, culturally developed feelings about what love is and should be. These feelings ran headlong into the enactments of *anbu* that my Tamil friends presented to me. My idea of love and their idea of *anbu* took deceptively similar forms. My Tamil friends and I were attracted to each other partly for that reason. I thought that they loved me· they thought that I felt *anbu* toward them. But just at those times when I thought that there was some fundamental something that all human beings shared and that I had found that something at last in Tamil Nadu, suddenly some small act would cast a deep shadow between us again, and once again they were strangers, whom I feared and mistrusted. I found myself thinking, time after time, "But this isn't love." Now after years, I can answer myself with detached amusement "Of course it isn t love, it's *anbu*." (p. 39).

As she now defines it, *anbu* is a concept. . . . that connotes also containment within bounds· concealment; habituation; cruelty and harshness; even dirtiness when contrasted with conventional purity; the reversal of oppositions and the erasure of distinctions; a trading and sharing of houses, children and selves—and of course *food*. Food as a signifier of the emotions features prominently in other contexts as well—in fact it appears in this book almost as *the language* of the emotions in South Asia. According to Owen Lynch, for instance, good food (*bhojana*)—along with marijuana (*bhang*), remembering the Lord through prayer (*bhajana*) and physical exercise (*kasrat*)—is one of the four elements that are conducive to a feeling of *mast*, to the making of *mastram*, a dominant cultural idea of the Chaube Brahman priestly community of Mathura. (Note the highly masculinist construction of identity here.) Food offerings are a central theme, too, in transactions between the devotee and Lord Krishna as described in Peter Bennett's paper on the Pushti Marg or Vallabhacarya sect, and in Paul Tooney s explicitly titled: "Krishna's consuming passions: food as metaphor and metonym for emotion at Mount Govardhan". In both these sects, incidentally, the motif of maternal love (*vatsalya bhava*) is dominant, and the erotic relatively suppressed. On the other hand, as Frederique Marglin insists in a fascinating reconstruction of the ritual dance of the devadasies of Puri, "the dominant mood of the dance is erotic, srngara (p. 219), the dance forging "a sharp metonymic relation with food, dust, *srngara* rasa, and sovereignty. Because the devadasi dances only during the main midday royal food offering, the only one with food for the public at large, the dance, as transforming food into its own essence, *srngara rasa*, is identified with the sovereign's feeding his subjects" (p. 218). As the devotees roll in the dust on the dance floor they absorb the sexual fluid of the dancer, "directly linking the sexuality of the davadasi with the nourishing power of the food and the power of sovereignty" (p. 218).

Besides the two papers on cross-cultural religious experience, already referred to, two others papers evade the conspicuously gustatory expression of emotions: Sylvia Vatuk's important paper on the anxieties of the Indian aged, and Pauline Kolenda's account of "culturally expected humour concerning sexuality and marriage alliances" among the "untouchable" Chuhra of north India—joking, abuse, teasing and sexual bantering in everyday contexts between equals (between men and between women of the same generation); between the bridegroom and the bride's sisters; between brothers-in-law (sala-*bahanoi*); between cross-sex parents-in-law; and, the classic instance, between a woman and her husband's younger brother. As Kolenda sums up: "The effect of this use of the discourse of forbidden sexuality—accusations of incest, exchange marriage, adultery, bastardry, and cuckoldry—is that the hierarchical relations between the bridetakers and the bridegivers are leveled" (p. 142) through symbolic reversals and "rituals of rebellion mediating the tensions that are a structural concomitant of north Indian marriage. There have been numerous ethnographic references to "lewd" and "obscene" joking behaviour, but its content is rarely systematically explored. I regard this paper as a significant contribution to the ethnographic literature on marriage and the family in north India, to the literature on the culture of low caste communities, to the comparative interpretation of what anthropologists call "joking" and "avoidance" relations.

And of course to the anthropology of the emotions!

Kolenda, Lynch and Vatuk are well known and established Indianist anthropologists. The other contributors to this volume are relatively junior, and some of them may not be known in India at all. This book provides an inviting introduction to the work of this younger generation. Indeed, leaving aside the caveat with which this review began, which, after all, concern only the "framing" of the volume, we have here "food" for thought, for the emotions and a taste of the delights of culturally-sensitive ethnography.

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Rooted in the Household

Saba Waseem

WOMEN AND THE HOUSEHOLD IN ASIA—VOL. 4. GENDER AND THE HOUSEHOLD DOMAIN—SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Edited by Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Karuna Chanana. Series editor Leela Dube.

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 264, Rs. 195.00.

Women's studies have tended to focus on the woman as an individual entity, a methodology which ignores the households of which they form a part. Women particularly in South Asia are deeply rooted in the household and in order to understand their position it is necessary to examine intrahousehold relationships, their dynamics, their historical, socio-economic and political contexts. And when the focus is on the household, the necessity of seeing the various interlinkages between individual household and the wider structures and processes of society is highlighted.

It was for this reason that the regional conference for Asia on women and the household held in New Delhi in 1985 decided to focus on the various aspects of this theme which has tremendous relevance for the Asian region as a whole. The theme also exposes the erroneous but commonly held notion that there exists an undifferentiated Asian model for the position of women and for gender relations. An exploration in a cross cultural perspective of the diverse production, family and kinship systems, the relationship between households and the condition of women can help develop an understanding of the similarities, variations and differences in the position of women across the region. The five collections of papers arising from the conference deal with the various aspects of the relationship between the woman, the household and the wider political and economic structures.

This particular volume contains papers broadly dealing with the structural and cultural dimensions of intrahousehold relationships. It also includes a few papers from the area of health, essentially concerned with the phenomenon of intrahousehold differentiation in resource allocation and its underlying assumptions. All papers in the volume deal with South Asia: seven with India and two in Bangladesh.

The household can be best understood by looking at what it does. Usha Kanhere in her study of lower socio-economic households in Gujarati communities in Ahmedabad examines the differential socialization of boys and girls. On the basis of data collected from 130 families, she describes the socialization practises that groom boys and girls into adult roles. She highlights the persistence of kin and caste ties even in a big city and finds no evidence to show that urbanization tends to loosen them. Living in towns opens up new educational and employment opportunities but only for the men and the boys. Schooling succeeds in alienating the boys from their traditional caste occupations but if they do not do well in school they do not have any alternative, resulting in delinquent behaviour. Though preference for boys is marked, girls are not unwelcome since they share in domestic work and assist the mother in her economic activity. Girls not only forego better jobs but their lives are restricted with direct interaction with the world outside severely curtailed. The so-called freedom of the lower castes is, says Kanhere, exaggerated. There is however inkling of a change in the attitude of women who have received some education.

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K.M.A. Aziz in his study of gender creation from birth to adolescence in rural Bangladesh explores the same idea of gender-based allocation of responsibilities and role models. The subordinate position of the woman, he finds, is reinforced by religious beliefs and cultural practises. He uses the novel methodology of using the actual statements of the respondents to register the differences in attitudes across class and sex. Though he does not do a statistical analysis of these responses to arrive at general conclusions about differences in perceptions and though the sample size seems to be small (less than ten in most cases) the responses in themselves are revealing. The centrality of seclusion and modesty as a virtue for women emerge in his analysis as does the idea that female sexuality is dangerous to men and upon women falls the onus of protecting their honour through modest dress and restricted social interaction.

This obsession with restricting interaction with the rest of the world reaches bizzare proportions in Kamala Ganesh's account of a group of women living in a walled fortress in Tamil Nadu. The purpose is to maintain the caste status of the Kottai Pillaimars (a sub-caste of the agricultural Vellalas) by maintaining the purity of its women. It is widely believed that veiling and seclusion are alien to the South. Ganesh uses this example to show how the power of chastity as sacred and dangerous is deeply ingrained in the Dravida psyche. The secluded women inherit assets but enjoy little autonomy.

The idea that a woman's position is determined solely by the assets she has at her command is further refuted by Joan Mencher, who takes examples from the landed and the landless in Kerala. Laying down six indicators for measuring autonomy, which include right to buy things for herself and control over her sexual relations with her spouse, she concludes that merely owning property or earning do not grant autonomy.

Hanna Papanek puts forward an interesting thesis that withdrawal of women is not an end product of social mobility but is itself a strategy for further mobility.

The papers in the other section which focus on health, work on the same lines—about the need to adopt a contextual focus to look at women in relation to the household and to abandon policies which are individual oriented.

For one the survival of the household depends upon the woman's health. But it also depends upon the availability of working hands which have to be provide often at the cost of the woman's health. Also, increased household income does not imply better health for the woman because of internal inequalities in the household.

Focusing on policies, Meera Chatterjee points out the paradox in India where the chief providers of health care the women are the most neglected. Access to external health care is closely related to education and employment. ❑

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Jiddu Krishnamurti: His Life and Death

May 1895 – February 1986

CHATURVEDI BADRINATH

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF KRISHNAMURTI

By Mary Lutyens

John Murray London 1990, pp. xvi+235
£16.95

I know now, with greater certainty than ever before, that there is real beauty in life, real happiness that cannot be shattered by any physical happening a great strength which cannot be weakened by any passing event, and a great love which is permanent, imperishable and unconquerable. Of all that Krishnamurti ever said, these words of his, written soon after Nitya died in November 1925, were the most simple and moving. Those were words also of great power, and their power lay in their simplicity and truth.

In the years to follow Krishnamurti was to develop however a view of beauty happiness love and truth that was not in the least simple. It became increasingly complicated. During the sixty years of his public speaking, in different parts of the world if thousands of people flocked to hear him, men and women, it was not because they derived comfort from what he said, or because they directly perceived his vision of human truth, or because they hoped that they would change after listening to him, but mostly because they wanted to experience something of the magic of that astonishing energy that flowed through his words, through his luminous eyes above all.

To read *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti* by Mary Lutyens, who had known him longer than anybody else now living, is to experience, once again, with full force the enigmatic energy that Krishnamurti was. Nine days before he died in his sleep, on 17 February 1986, Mary Cadogan had written down a question for him: 'When Krishnaji dies what *really* happens to that extraordinary focus of understanding and energy that is K?' His immediate reply was: 'It is gone. If someone goes wholly into the teachings perhaps they might touch that but one cannot *try* to touch it.'

Later that morning, 7 February, speaking in a voice that was weak, but with 'intent emphasis', as Mary Zimbalist noted, Krishnamurti said, among other things: for seventy years that super-energy—no—that immense energy, immense intelligence, has been using this body. I don't think people realize what tremendous energy and intelligence went through this body—there's twelve-cylinder engine. And for seventy years—was a pretty long time—and now the body can t stand anymore. Nobody unless the body has been prepared very carefully protected and so on—nobody can understand what went through this body. Nobody. Don't anybody pretend. Nobody. I repeat this: nobody amongst us or the public know what went on. I know they don t. And now after seventy years it has come to an end.

In the same recording, which was also the last he went so far as to say: 'You won't find another body like this, or that supreme intelligence operating in a body for many hundred years. You won't see it again. When he goes, it goes. There is no consciousness left behind of th*at* consciousness, of *that* state. They'll all pretend or try to imagine they can get into touch with that. Perhaps they will somewhat if they live the teachings. But nobody has done it. Nobody. And so that's that.

These might on the surface appear to be fretful words, which perhaps they are. But, the prophecy in them apart, they also truthfully recall most of the essential elements of the incredibly fascinating story of Krishnamurti's life: 'energy intelligence 'the body as a *vehicle* its preparation its protection the teachings what went through the body '*that* consciousness *that* state and, finally they will all pretend or try to imagine . But, I think, those words also do very much more. They show profound irony which Krishnamurti never saw in that his last anxieties were destroying his teachings, just as his teachings were simultaneously destroying what was being said in those teachings.

With the skills of a superb biographer, Mary Lutyens has narrated the story of Krishnamurty s life whether or not it was a manifestation of Lord Maitreya, who the Theosophists believed was in a previous incarnation Jesus Christ. The present volume is a considerably shortened version of *The Years of Awakening*, published in 1975, *The Years of Fulfillment*, brought out eight years after the first volume of her biography of Krishnamurti, and later *The Open Door* which is an account of his last illness and death. For someone associated with the man all her life she is remarkable in her honesty with her material—the events, the relationships, the jealousies the heartbreaks the anxieties the adulation and the applause, the ugly conflicts and the going away. No less remarkable, for a biographer who sets out to inquire into the mystery who or what is Krishnamurti, is her intellectual distance manifest throughout that inquiry. It is that the distance the restrained intelligence, the observation of details which invests her biography of Krishnamurti or her inquiry with a compelling quality of a great novel.

Mary Lutyens does not bring herself very often into her narration of the Krishnamurti story. But when she does, she deepens the narration in a most sensitive way. For instance, when she describes Krishnamurti s walks with her in her bluebell woods in Susex. 'We never talked seriously and during the walk we would not speak at all. I knew he relished the silence, the sight and scent of bluebells, the peace of the wood, the birdsong and the tender young beech leaves. He would often stop and look back through his legs at the blue mist. He was what he had always been to me, not a teacher but a beloved human being, closer than any of my siblings. It pleased me to think that I was perhaps the one person with whom he never had to make an effort.' Or, for instance, after a very intense conversation with K in 1979, at Brockwood, in K's large bedroom looking out over the lawn and the fields beyond, she says: 'I went back to London with a feeling of huge compassion for him, a more protective love than I had ever known.

Yet, it is astonishing, it did not occur to Mary Lutyens, or to K himself who in 1970 had suggested to her that she write an account of his early life, that any such undertaking was a total negation of the most central part of all his teachings: die to the yesterday; die to the past; for only *then* is true freedom possible. Supposing this to be wholly true, which for K it most certainly was, then was it not a manifest failure on his part to initiate and be continually interested in the writing of his biography of 'earlier years' and also of 'later years'? The present, reduced in its utmost purity to the moment, without the slightest shadow of the past, *can* have no biography. A biography of Jiddu Krishnamurti is, and must always remain, in terms of his own beliefs, a profound contradiction.

Perhaps this plain conclusion was somewhere in a deep corner of Mary s mind. For she offers what might be an explanation. Where she records that it was on K s request that she began writing his biography she adds that K seemed keenly interested in 'the boy as he referred to himself,

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and wondered why C.W. Leadbeater had picked him out on the Adyar beach in Madras, and Annie Besant had later proclaimed to be the messiah the world was waiting for? 'This curiosity about the boy Mary writes though intense was quite impersonal. It was as if he hoped that the written record of the true story might reveal something to explain the phenomenon of the man in whom he had an equally impersonal interest.

Far from resolving the contradiction mentioned above, this raises several new questions. Firstly, in wanting that record to be written fully he seemed to be saying that the explanation of the present lies in the past, but that is also the very thing that he fiercely denied all his life. Secondly, if the impersonal nature of his curiosity about his past answers the objection that by showing any interest in his own past he was destroying the very core of his teachings it will still have to be explained how it was different from that impersonal curiosity which, we do know a great many men and women show about *their* past. There is no possible answer to this which will not invite fresh problems, all destructive of K's teachings at one level or another.

Mary Lutyens once drew up a brief statement of the core of K's teachings. When she showed it to him, he changed it completely, retaining the word 'core' only. His own statement is to be found on pages 149-50 of the present volume, which begins with his famous words of 3 August 1929, 'Truth is a pathless land . Since it contains opinions which flow from something even more fundamental in his thinking, I propose the following summary as the core of all that he was saying.

The brain is always the yesterday, and today is the shadow of yesterday and tomorrow is the continuation of that shadow somewhat changed but it still smells of yesterday. So the brain lives and has its being in shadows; it is safer more comforting. (*Notebook* 1961 published in 1976, with a foreword by Mary Lutyens.) Then thought is the response of memory as experience, as knowledge as opportunity. When thought is functioning it is the past therefore there is no new living at all; it is the past living in the present, modifying itself and the present. So there is nothing new in life that way and when something new is to be found there must be the absence of the past, the mind must not be cluttered up with thought, fear, pleasure, and everything else. All continuity is thought; when there is continuity there is nothing new.' 'Either you live in the past, or you live totally differently: that is the whole point. (*The Urgency of Change*, 1970 in answer to the questions put to K by Alain Naude at Malibu.)

Everything else in Krishnamurti's teachings was derived from this core his total rejection of *all* traditions, religions, sects, paths to truth, forms of thought, thought as such, consciousness knowledge, and words. Truth can *never* be reached through any of these. They offer in some form or the other, what we as human beings seek most: psychological security. But the security they seem to offer is false. Truth can be reached only through understanding, and understanding is not within the borders of time'. Time must be denied.

. . . it is astonishing, it did not occur to Mary Lutyens, or to K himself who in 1970 had suggested to her that she write an account of his early life that any such undertaking was a total negation of the most central part of all his teachings: die to the yesterday; die to the past· for only then is true freedom possible. Supposing this to be wholly true which for K it most certainly was, then was it not a manifest failure on his part to initiate and be continually interested in the writing of his biography of 'earlier years' and also of 'later years'? The present reduced in its utmost purity to the moment without the slightest shadow of the past can have no biography. A biography of Jiddu Krishnamurti is and must always remain, in terms of his own beliefs a profound contradiction.

The method followed by Krishnamurti, and nowhere better exemplified than in *Notebook*, may be summed up in his own words. To deny knowledge, experience, the known is to invite the unknown. The total denial of thought, the idea and the word brings freedom from the known; with the total denial of the known is the essence of freedom. To deny and stand alone, without tomorrow, without a future shattering through every refuge, every formula every idea, every symbol and be naked, unburnt and clear.

But none of this can be *said*, or even *thought*, without repudiating itself. Total denial of thought is itself a thought. Total denial of words was advocated by Krishnamurti through an incredible outpouring of words, spread over sixty years. And his denial of the known was conducted from the support and refuge of all that was familiar and known and comforting. If he was totally sincere in what he was advocating, and was not merely mesmorized by his command of words then the only proper method for him ought to have been, as it was to every genuine mystic, silence.

I went to see Krishnamurti when he came to Madras for his annual winter talks at Vasant Vihar. It was either in the December of 1963, or the following year, I cannot recall, for I have never in my life kept a diary. Although I was unknown to him, and had gone there without prior appointment he readily agreed to receive me and, without any fuss, came straight to the small room where I was asked to wait for him. After introducing myself I told him that I was somewhat troubled in my mind about at least some parts of his teaching and certainly about the method that he was following. 'Let us go into it, sir, if you like: what is it?' Very briefly I told him what my objections were, somewhat on the lines of the previous paragraph although not in the same words. At that time they did not have a sharp focus either.

I suggested to him that since dialogue seemed to be an important part of his inquiry into the nature of things, it would perhaps, be a good idea if he and I could have a dialogue in front of the same audience to which he spoke. K rejected that suggestion straightaway. But, after a few moments, during which he kept looking at me with his searching eyes, which were also full of curiosity and kindness, he suggested that he had a dialogue in a small group instead, to which, he said, he would invite some of *his* friends, and I could invite some of *my* friends if I so wished. He fixed a date, two or three days later, and a time in the morning. When I returned to my flat I was shaking with a strange excitement.

I had invited to come with me Mr. S. Rangara-

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jan who was to become a Justice of Delhi High Court and a young woman whom I had just then met and at that time wanted to impress. But she was already half on K's side, which meant that I carried with me an audience of one and a half. K had invited some ten people, most of them women, two of them Indian and the rest from Europe or America. Mary Lutyens could not have been among them either in 1963 or in 1964. Maybe Mary Zimbalist was there, but I would not know. We all sat on the floor of a somewhat large room, I sitting next to K, who was glowing with some inner energy. There were no introductions. He just turned to me and said: 'So we are here, sir, shall we begin?'

I began by pointing out that he was discussing things which language by its very nature could not deal with but he was inquiring into them with ordinary language; in the process giving to ordinary words meanings which were vastly different from what ordinary men and women understood by them; and the result was that whereas meanings had become almost wholly private to him, his increasing number of audience thought that he was talking of life and its problems as they understood them; so that there was more confusion than clarity, for which he was equally responsible, for through his unceasing activity of talking he was trying to express in words what was inexpressible. I quoted Wittgenstein, although I could have quoted from Indian tradition: what *can* be said, mut be said clearly, and 'Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.' My question to Krishnamurti was: 'why not silence sir why do you speak?

That question was never answered. He responded by inquiring: 'Can it be that I speak because I want to gain name and fame, or because I want to make money thereby, or because I want to influence and change human perceptions radically, or maybe because some kind of madness has possessed my brain? No, sir, it is for none of these reasons that I speak.' He became reflective for a while, when one of the two Indian women present there intervened. 'What a question to ask!' she exclaimed, rather aggressively. 'You might as well have asked: why does the sun shine? and the wind blow? or why does the flower blossom?' At this I turned to K.

K repeated the question to himself, 'Why do I speak?', and became even more reflective, as if searching for an adequate answer. The lady intervened again: 'I will tell you why Krishnaji speaks.' I told her, as politely as possible, that I had no interest in her interpretation. He was there and my question was addressed to him. She went ahead all the same with her little speech. A few minutes after she had finished, K suddenly got up, looked very tired, and disappeared to his private rooms. That evening I was to learn that the woman who had insisted on interpreting Krishnamurti right in his presence was Mrs. Pupul Jayakar.

I felt very disappointed but soon I put the events of that morning away from my mind. That evening I received a phone call from a woman who said she was Mrs Sunanda Patwardhan that she was present at what was supposed to have been a dialogue between me and K, and that she would like to meet me if that were possible, in which case could I fetch her from Vasant Vihar which I did, and brought her to my flat overlooking the sea. She told me that in her seventeen years of association with K she had never seen him as agitated as he was after than morning s conference: he kept repeating to himself the question that I had put to him, and he respected what I had said. I was grateful for Mrs Patwardhan's visit.

I never met K again, but I kept hearing that in his yearly talks in Madras he would often begin by asking: 'Why do I speak?', or bring this question in somewhere in the middle of the talk, and then move on to something else. The whole point is: in the very act of speaking Krishnamurti was repudiating what he was teaching, the denial of thought and idea and words.

There are immense problems with other aspects of K's teachings. It is not possible to go into them within the space of this review-article. His teachings have a certain structure, which it is easy to perceive, and that structure is very weak in terms of human reality. Krishnamurti took hold of one part of human truth, which is demonstrably there in all human beings and thought it to be the whole truth about them, and denounced it most fiercely. It is true, for instance, that memories, the past, weave a pattern in the human mind, and one is unable to free oneself from it, the pattern created by a tradition, a religion, a relationship. But what is equally true is that nobody lives wholly in the past, nobody can, or else life will become unbearable. People transcend history all the time, most of all their own individuality. But it is one thing to transcend one's past, and quite another thing to denounce it as the source of all misery. K does only the latter. Yet, nobody's life was more of a pattern and more predictable for that reason, than his.

Krishnamurti's life should be seen, I suggest, not as a revolutionary philosophical document, but as compelling drama, with its underlying tragedy, and recurring patches of what was simply hilarious comedy with its long list of dram*atic personae.*

Mary Zimbalist will interest one very greatly. Mary Lutyens's account of her association with K is so very vivid that to read it is almost to touch her. From 1963 to the very last moment of K's life she was a most valuable companion to him. As perceptive and intelligent as she was gentle and elegant, the record of her conversations with K, especially in the last few days of his life, are as illustrative of her inner self as they are touched with dramatic irony. When her husband, Sam Zimbalist, the film producer, suddenly died in 1958, she had gone, still devastated with grief, to hear K at Ojai in 1960 and later had a private interview with him during which he had talked to her about death in a way she was ready to understand. During K's various visits to India, when she was not with him, he would write to her daily letters. In 1985, when she could not accompany him to India because of a previous illness, She had asked K if she would see him again, he had become so frail. 'If I am going to die I ll telephone to you right away,' he assured her. Instead of writing daily letters to her, he dictated to her long letters on to cassettes which he then posted to her daily. She was sitting on his bedside when he died in Ojai a few months later.

But no figure will haunt one more than that of Lady Emily, Mary Lutyens's mother. From the day, 5 May 1911 she had gone to Charing Cross Station, in London, to receive K as the messiah, Krishna was to have a very central place in her life. She looked after him as a mother and revered him as a messiah. K poured out his heart in his letters to her, from which her daughter has quoted at length. When he wrote to her from Amsterdam that he had fallen in love with Haleen Knothe, a beautiful American girl of seventeen, Lady Emily suffered for she was possessive of Krishna. She suffered even more when George Arundale became jealous of her influence on Krishna and persuaded Annie Besant to debar her from seeing Krishna, for Arundale was going round saying that she did know who he really was and was encouraging his lower nature at the expense of the higher. K remained devoted to her. But she suffered most when Krishna declared, in 1929, 'Truth is a pathless land' and he wanted no followers. Always a follower, with no inner resources of her own, as her daughter records, Lady Emily felt shattered, for she had waited all those years for Krishna to say to her, 'Follow me.' K continued to meet her and write to her. But by 1963, when she was eighty-eight, she had lost her memory completely; and when K visited her, she was not sure who he was. He would hold her hand in his, and chant to her softly, which she loved. In 1964 Lady Emily died, and K sent a cable to Mary, saying 'I loved her.

If I were to make a film on the dramatic life of Jiddu Krishnamurti, it would be a very, very different film than the two already made by others. I would end it with the story of the ring as narrated by Mary Lutyens.

'Occasionally at lunch I would ask him to wear my ring, a turquoise set in baguette diamonds, which he knew well because my mother had always worn it. He would put it on his little finger. When he returned it as we were leaving the restaurant the diamonds would be sparkling as if they had just been cleaned by a jeweller. One day, when I met one of my grand daughters after lunch she said to me, 'How wonderful your ring looks. Have you just had it cleaned?' ❑

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An Elegant Biography

Narayani Gupta

PATRICK GEDDES: SOCIAL EVOLUTIONIST AND CITY PLANNER

By Helen Meller

Routledge, London, 1990, xvi + 359, illustrations, bibliography, index, £ 45.00

The safest course for a scholar is to stay within the boundaries of his chosen 'discipline'; if he strays into the grey areas between them, he is called a maverick. If he tries to combine scholarship with being an activist, he will encounter raised eyebrows, and may be thought to be decidedly eccentric. Patrick Geddes was a maverick in the true sense, someone who admired many other scholars, but himself remained a masterless man. He did, however, create many disciples, one of whom at least, Lewis Mumford, is perhaps better known than him. Geddes' *Cities in Evolution* is not reprinted now, whereas Mumford's *The City is History* is.

Helen Meller teaches social and economic history at the University of Nottingham. Her earlier work includes a book on Bristol in the 19th century, and a book and numerous articles on town-planning and urban development in Britain and India. Biography must be one of the most difficult genres of writing, and Dr Meller has succeeded in writing a remarkably elegant book, which portrays the personality of Geddes as well as the spirit of the time. Her travails will be appreciated by anyone who knows anything of Geddes, an endearing and exasperating person whose mind worked overtime, and who was interested in a bewildering range of subjects, and whose writing was so prolific that till today his papers have not been catalogued. For a biographer to have stayed afloat and not been dragged into a bog of detail is a great achievement. Dr Meller has a reassuring way of pausing at intervals and standing back from her subject; also, while quoting extensively from Geddes, she does not let him do all the speaking. One might ask, "*Another* biography of Geddes?", since Boardman, Kitchen, Stalley and Tyrwhitt have written his life-history already. In a sense Geddes has to be re-read by each succeeding generation. None of the earlier accounts has been hagiographical, but Dr Meller has struck the best balance between appreciation and criticism.

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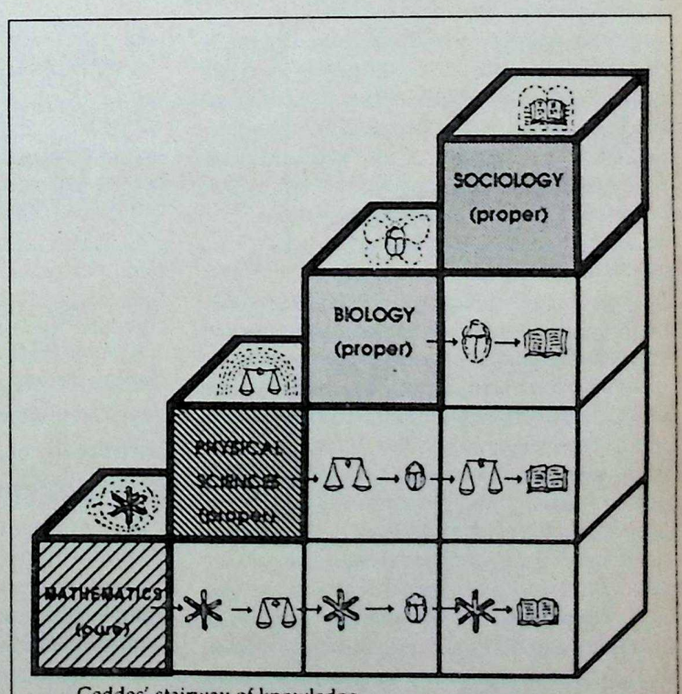
Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was a Renaissance man, such as every country produces once in so many years. Perennially young, everlastingly curious, he asked questions and built bridges, so that he can equally be claimed by sociologists, political scientists, geographers, townplanners, architects and biologists. His is not the wisdom only of the library-desk, but that born of observation, interaction and involvement. Those Indians who do not know of him should make his acquaintance. A middleman, like David Hare, Edward Thompson, E.B. Havell and C.F. Andrews, he helped Indians to appreciate their own country. His ability to translate social concern into activism was a great quality.

The succession of men and their works in their city should thus be like that of rings of a tree stem, which are ever being outgrown yet continue of service — not only mechanically keeping their place and burying their past in maintaining the whole tree, but also carrying sap, and like to its fullest and youngest life, of leaf and flower and fruit, of buds anew.

—Patrick Geddes *Town Planning in Balrampur*

Geddes creative years spanned the 1870s to the 1930s, and his work took him to France, India and Palestine; he also spent many years in his native Scotland. What a half-century that was! Just as a century previously, the *Ancien Regime* had been knocked down by the French Revolution, so now *laissez-faire* was being argued out by those in favour of interventionism and socialism. Rationalism was reincarnated, backed by positivism and a mature science and technology; at the same time the Arts and Crafts Movement was appealing for an aesthetically and emotionally satisfying urban life in place of the smoke-and-fog infernoes of the industrial revolution, and the ugly plaster decoration produced by modern technology. Secularism and an open outlook were protesting against rigid ideologies. Many intellectuals and professional architects, planners and engineers were concerned about the quality of life, and how this could be enriched and improved by more meaningful curricula and by a congenial environment. And in the middle of all this plummeted an eager, voluble Patrick Geddes—"a most unsettling person" as Paddy Kitchen called him, who was "open at every pore to the ideas that were in circulation at the time" (p. 29).

Emotional commitment characterised Geddes from his childhood. Looking back on his early days, he was to see them as idyllic and as having been enriched not by material affluence but by the intangible wealth of the companionship of an enlightened family. He studied the natural sciences, the high point being the courses he did with Thomas Huxley. He travelled in Europe and Central America, and was enthralled by Paris—"Our true univesity is in the city, nay it *is* the city, great Paris itself." In the 1880s his interests moved towards the social sciences, and he sought to develop a biological, or organic, approach to political economy. The human geography being developed by Vidal de la Blache in France led him to ponder on the concept of the region as a category which would be relevant not only in geography but in other social sciences too. Comte's sociology, which saw all sciences and social sciences as the product of the times, also appealed to him. In



Geddes' stairway of knowledge

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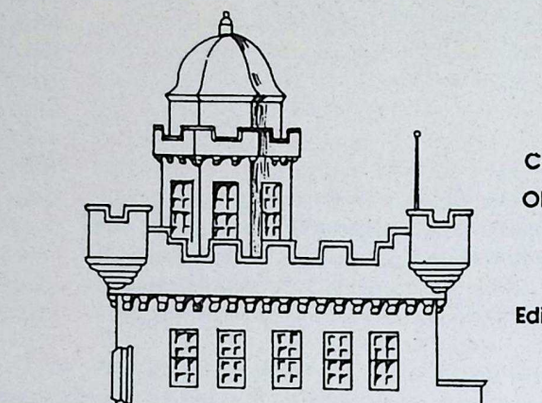
the years 1889-1919 he was fortunate in holding a chair of Botany at Dundee University with very generous terms of work which left him ample time to write, teach other courses, and develop his "Humanistic philosophy". Like many other academics at the time, he was active in outreach teaching, in extramural lectures and summer schools for workers and for women.

Edinburgh was an ideal place for someone interested in the quality of urban life. The city, which was proud of its ancient lineage, had been the first in Britain to set up an Improvement Trust, in 1867. Geddes in the 1880s organized an Environment Society, which started by cheering up dull public places and dreary schools with trees, plants and small-gardens. Even today a walk along the steep streets of Edinburgh reveals a little garden, a wrought-iron lamp or a little paved courtyard which bears Geddes' autograph. God is in the detail. Nothing was too small for his attention. When he worked on a scheme to improve the slums of Edinburgh he did this not from an airconditioned office but from a slum-tenement where he and his wife lived for many months. This gave him a lasting concern about housing, something that was engaging the attention of many others, particularly Charles Booth, at this time. His Edinburgh experience convinced him that the city was the product of the region. This he elaborated in the curious museum of the Outlook Tower, now a tourist attraction of Edinburgh. The Outlook Tower featured at the First International Town-Planning Conference in 1909. Its theme was elaborated in his famous Cities and Town-Planning Exhibition.



DIAGRAMMATIC ELEVATION OF THE OUTLOOK TOWER, EDINBURGH.

FROM PATRICK GEDDES Cities In Evolution

(LONDON: WILLIAMS AND NORGATE 1915).

The Outlook Tower, Edinburgh

'The Outlook Tower in diagrammatic elevation, with indications of uses of its storeys — as observatory, summer school, etc., of regional and civic surveys, with their widening relations, and with corrseponding practical initiatives.
Source: P. Geddes (1915) Cities in Evolution, London: Williams & Norgate, p. 324.

Civics' was a favourite subject with Geddes—not that travesty which is forced upon our poor schoolchildren, but the creative response to civic problems. The generous gift of American millionaire Carnegie for the town of his birth, Dunfermline, led to a report which is a classic piece of Geddesiana—which proposed a park studded with culture institutes, careful renovation of the houses and purification of the streams, all to be done after a survey of the area. Though only a modified version of this was carried through, Geddes had managed to bring together activities which were the preserve of different departments. (A lesson here for India, where towns are divided up as the preserve of different agencies who do not communicate with each other? and can't his definition of civics replace that dry-as-dust information that is pumped into our children under that head?)

India, more than any other country, had a chance to learn from Geddes.... Geddes found Indian towns attractive and well-planned, and had unkind things to say only about the metropolises built by the British. This was a completely new and startling viewpoint ...

*

India, more than any other country, had a chance to learn from Geddes. His 'Cities' exhibition, which had been appreciated by town-planners like Abercrombie and Ebenezer Howard, travelled to India on the invitation of the Governor of Madras. Geddes found Indian towns attractive and well-planned, and had unkind things to say only about the metropolises built by the British. This was a completely new and startling viewpoint, and he was invited by many city authorities and by princes in states like Indore, Baroda and Patiala, to survey their towns. A lot of persevering detective work has helped Dr Meller uncover an astonishing fifty reports, all of which India has forgotten or consigned to the waste-paper basket. (Contrast Pakistan, which has published Geddes' report on Lahore at the head of the recent master-plan for that city). Lucknow and Indore are the only towns which show indications of having followed up Geddes' suggestions. Indian students will be amazed to read that there was a time when Abercrombie used to send students to India to study Geddes' reports in the Calcutta Improvement Trust library! Geddes was a good friend of Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru and others, but the Indian he was closest to was Jagadish Chandra Bose, a humanist scientist like himself, whose biography he wrote (at the same time that Thompson wrote his biography of Rabindranath, and C.F. Andrews of Zakaullah). Geddes spent some years as Professor of Sociology and Civics at Bombay University. That Professor Ghurye later became a virulent critic of his should come as no surprise to us, since most academic departments are not 'built up' but divide constantly, like earthworms. Geddes' plans for the university campus in Palestine are important for his urging people to learn from the Arab villages, rather than to carry to Palestine the traditions of half-a-dozen European countries. Shades of Hasan Fathy and his mud architecture.

Dr Meller has been exceptionally fair in her evaluation of Geddes as a scholar and practitioner. He gave unstintingly of his time, but also expected others to work very hard. His scholarship was weakened by some obsessive hobbyhorses, as a townplanner his track-record is sadly limited, because the cooperation or follow-up action by others was not forthcoming. But few men of his time have left an impression on so many fields. All those who had anything to do with him would agree with Holford when he said "Wherever I go in my mind, I meet Geddes coming back." ❑

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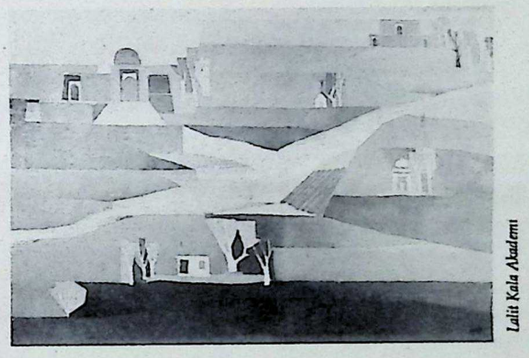
An Expensive Non-event on the Art Front

Krishna Chaitanya

India organized its first Triennale in 1968. Like droughts and floods, but mercifully with a longer cyclical periodicity, the event has been recurring and we have just been through the Seventh Triennale in which thirty-nine countries participated.

The age of technology has replaced the old Goals of Man, *Purushaartha* . It seeks the goal of being, endlessly, innovative. But, in general techniques in this prestigious and expensive show were far less sophisticated than in the "Object Art" exhibition from Germany incorporating light and movement at the National Gallery a few years ago. But some of them were not ineffective. Bruce Handelsman (USA) fragments photographs and then reconstructs them to present panoramas—of Indian cities and hinterland he has visited—which in some mysterious way integrate legendary past and the vibrant present, conserve precision in detail, with a derangement due to the deliberate, out-of-register splicing of pictorial segments. He also constructs boxed books of such pictures. Rather similar is the offering of Chandrasekhar Rao where four paintings are on centrally hinged panels; the face of a panel facing a painting has been covered with a mirror and thus extends the picture visually into a symmetrically composed panorama. There is a fortuitous but fascinating antiphonal counterpart to this in the arrangement by Mio Shirai (Japan). She places a solid object, like an egg-shaped white sphere for instance, in front of a large oval aperture in a panel. This pattern is repeated with spheres and panels serially placed one behind the other. The visual illusion is that the apertures are mirrors and the replication of the spheres is mere serial reflection. Another Japanese artist, Katayama, seems to want to destroy the very surface needed for his painting, for the large paper sheet looks as if it has been burnt away in many places by blowtorch. On the other hand, Kim Hong Joo from South Korea appropriates a third dimension, for the sage in his painting has a long beard of fibres which extend below the frame.

But the newness of such showmanship quickly flakes and peels off to reveal a triviality and we might pause to muse whether old wisdom cannot give us something weightier. The *Gita* held up the goal of gaining skill in action and traditional commentary has clarified it as the skill in discriminating what is of moment to the essential being of man from what is not (*aatmaanaatma-viveka-kausalam*). This is scarcely the skill we see in endless technical innovation which, in its craving for the sensationally new, destroys nourishing and conserving tradition whose palimpsest we need for progress, evolutionary or revolutionary. Tradition develops through myths, condenses like a crystal in the icon, because both relate to some concepts about the basic order of the world. This is not to say that the sensing of the deeper realities of existence in myth and icon have always been faultless. But since the material is rich, and has melted into our bloodstream, total rejection is not the solution, but reinterpretation. The icon survives in the contribution of India and mercifully what we get here is not the icons contaminated by voyeurish Kavya poetry but creations that recover the primitive sensing of the numinous. Janakiram's "Durga" (repousse copper plate) has not come to us from the classicised Sanskritic pantheon, she is the Dravidian deity, protector of communities and punisher of their foes. The arrangement of the platform in Vijayavelu's "Dasa Linga" (stone) may recall the geometry of the arrangement of bricks in the Aryan altar, but the forms recall the older telluric deities remembered in snake worship. But this traditional current runs weak elsewhere in the Triennale. Byzantine iconic form has been overlaid on Hellenic myth in a painting of Neptune from Cyprus but the overtones of new meaning, if any, are elusive. In the case of sculptures from Zimbabwe, however, the powerful iconism of Africa still lingers and is being reinterpreted in the light of contemporaneous life-experience.



Lalit Kala Akademi

All in all, this Triennale has been mostly a presentation of rootless art, modern, post-modern or what have you, which may have shed the shackles of tradition but have lost its nourishment too. Has this breakaway led to any new vision which will redeem us from the many decays that have led to the diminishment of man? This involves a search for some humanistic significance in the show. And that seems futile.

The incredible pretentiousness of the modern mind, which would have been hilarious but for the fact that it is a psychodiagnostic symptom which suggests that the disease of man has become terminal, comes out in the Kristin Jones-Andrew Ginzel (USA) installation art. They have revealed their Messianic intention thus: "Our aim is to question, and to magnify, the essential tensions that are the fibre of reason, of comprehension." It seems that a live animal was also to be included in the arrangement but the Akademi didn't like the idea. Pity, because the goat or calf would have had good fodder for a month and also grinned like the Cheshire cat for a whole month at the solemn stupidity of humans. We are told what each unit of the composition—the boulder, the pot of water, the mound of egg-shaped stones—stands for. But that approach gives us signs with attributed meanings like words or the marks of shorthand, not aesthetic symbols which are homologues and not analogues or tokens of meaning. We are left with only one or two perceptions of humanistic value in the whole show. One painting from Cyprus has some sensing of the ecological crisis. Another painting, from Yugoslavia, presents the "Exile": moving, and topical too, for besides the exiles of the past from overrun lands we have today exiles from specific regions of the same country. The states of Yugoslavia have started rejecting federal laws, the Slavs may find it increasingly uncomfortable to live in Kosovo with its Turkish majority and in the Kala Mela a city gallery had put up an exhibition of the works of the artists of the exiled community from Kashmir.

Let us by all means fling open our windows to winds from all quarters of the world, but let us not be blown away from the search for our renewed identities. They do need renewal because the times have changed. But compulsive mimicry of affluent countries is draining our resources, inadequate even for survival, and draining our being too. And why wasn't the Triennale International Jury required to give a report with detailed evaluation? Because it would have looked more and more comic as it went on to describe the emperor's clothes at length? One learns that a systematic study is afoot towards framing a cultural policy for the nation. Ventures like Triennales and Art Festivals should be seriously assessed. ❑

Krishna Chaitanya is the author of more than thirty-five books on Art, Literature and Culture.

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The Complex Becomes Comprehensible

R. Ramachandran

COSMOLOGY: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE INVISIBLE

Jean Adouze, Michel Casse, Jean Claude Carriere

Translated from French by Saroj Butani

(Original title: *Conversations sur 1'Invisible.* Published by Pierre Belfond, Paris, 1988)
Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1990, pp. 200, Rs. 110.00

GENETICS: THE THREAD OF LIFE

Philippe Kourilsky

Translated from French by Saroj Butani and Revised by Indra Nath

(Original title: *Artisans de I' Heredite.* Published by Odile Jacob, Paris, 1987).

Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1990, pp. 195, Rs. 75.00

It is unfortunate that Indian readers are by and large exposed to books—both at the popular and professional levels—written only by American or British authors and to an extent by Soviet authors. The problem is, of course, the language and the State owned publishing industry of the Soviet Union has been carrying out remarkable work for years in making English translations of Russian works, in all disciplines and at all levels, available widely.

To talk specifically of science, there are perhaps an equally large number of scientists of equal calibre in countries of the European community, particularly France. The Indian edition of the popular French semi-technical science magazine *La Recherche* has been available under the name *World Scientist* for about four years now and has been well received. But on the book front the above two titles on popular science under review probably mark the first efforts to produce translated Indian editions of well known French books on science. The Office of the Counsellor for Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, Embassy of France, needs to be commended for this. Hopefully it is not just a part of the Festival of France in India and will be followed by more such books, not only at the popular level but also at the higher professional levels.

The book on Cosmology is indeed remarkable, presenting as it does in book form the freewheeling discussions among three intellectuals from different disciplines, spread over a year and a half, on as esoteric a subject as cosmology. Jean Adouze and Micihel Casse are distinguished French astrophysicists, and the former is also the Scientific Adviser to President Francois Mitterand, and the third name may even be well known among the general Indian public. Jean-Claude Carriere, a famous name in the French liberal arts scene, has been for long associated with the playwright Peter Brook, who presented *Mahabharata* on stage and screen with a French perspective and interpretation.

The three had been getting together once a week at the Institute d'astrophysique and, as Adouze puts it, "conducted the experiment of long conversation. That's all. We talked of things here and there." There were no recordings but the three apparently took heaps of notes. And now these have been put into writing, while maintaining the general style of conversation, with the "hope that they will be read in the same way as a landscape is unravelled during a mindful outing."

Why cosmology? It is a field that has made rapid strides during this century. Beginning with Einstein's General Theory of Gravitation, which inextricably links matter with the geometry of space and times that forms the fabric of the universe at large, the detection of the all pervading radio noise as a relic of the origins of the universe and the extraordinary astronomical observations of different kinds of galaxies, strange and powerful stellar objects like quasars, pulsars and even some signatures of black holes, have all together brought the present day physicist closest ever to understanding the universe.

As a practising scientist Adouze observes "there is a certain automatism existing among scientists. Just press the button and I will tell you the story of the universe. But this automatism is not enough. It becomes a little cold and mechanical. We feel the need to go out, to evoke interest, to walk in the street. Scientists are being incessantly asked questions and they must answer them since they are there for that. But they, in turn, have a desire to ask questions."

It is this desire for exchange of ideas about the 15 million year old universe, that includes us beings, whose make up was already destined by the nature of the cosmic dust that formed a million years after the "big bang", if there was one, occurred, that forms the essence of this delightful conversation.

Why invisible? Ironically, as Carriere observes, in the visual medium as the cinema the invisible man becomes a compelling image. Likewise, just when science has moved from pure contemplations of the sky to taking its inventory through astronomical observations the unobserved or the invisible seems to hold the key to its understanding.

Just when the three were actually conversing the Supernova 1987A exploded, marking the death of a star—a spectacle that is unlikely to be seen by humanity for another few hundreds of years. The supernova spewed a great deal of particles called neutrinos, which are invisible to man. These neutrinos seem to tell the physicist whether the universe is finite, infinite or oscillating. In fact, now there is enough evidence to believe that invisible matter, made perhaps of neutrinos and other exotic particles, greatly outweighs visible matter in the universe.

The entire phase of million years after the origin of the universe, if there really was a clearly defined origin in time and space, remains obscure. As Casse points out we are beginning to understand obscurity but this haze might lift to reveal many more hazes.

Was there a big bang? Who created the big bang? What was there before the universe came into being? Is there God? These are fascinating questions that is bound to occur to any mind. These are equally fundamental questions for the physicist as well and for some one like Jayant Narlikar who has written the foreword to this book there was no big bang. The universe has been in one uniform steady state throughout—sans origins.

Carriere claims during the course of the conversation that he had studied the *Mahabharata* for fourteen long years. His familiarity with *Mahabharata* and other ancient Indian texts like the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* is reflected in ample measure and his extensive quotations from these on questions regarding the cosmos and the universe provide interesting contrapunctal philosophical, spiritual and mystic inputs to the physicists' cut and dry view in terms of physical theories.

Carriere has also had long involvement with the cinema having worked with such personalities as Luis Banuel and Andrzej Wajda. Even aspects of cinema—from the French superstar Gerard Depardieu in Danton to Bunuel's *La Voiee Lactee* (The Milky Way) and his unfinished film—figure along with digressions and interludes that take into their fold Shakespeare, Levi Strauss and Matisse.

Actually, even the physicists' talk, influenced perhaps by the moderating presence of Carriere, is

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far from cut and dry. There is, of course, precise physics for the scientifically minded, a bit of unavoidable jargon as well—no equations though, apart from the ubiquitous $E = MC^2$, which cannot be escaped in any discussion on cosmology—but Carriere holds the reins and clarifies for the reader whenever necessary.

And in this threesome Michel Casse's words are truly enjoyable ("The zero was in the air and zero was needed by man", for example), who speaks with a literary and picturesque flourish that is rare among physicists. Unlike Adouze, Casse is a pessimist of sorts and, often, the devil's advocate to provide the right balance between Carriere, who is all awe with physics, and Adouze, the "authority" on the universe as far as the three are concerned.

The general flow of the conversation, with interesting asides that range from budgetary cuts to declining mathematics education to nuclear weapons to Chernobyl, is so natural and informal that a reader gets drawn into it immediately. Knowledge of physics required is zero. "Nothing purifies like knowledge," quotes Carriere from the *Bhagavad Gita* and there is certainly knowledge, sharpened by new insights arising from this amalgam of different minds, to be gained both by the lay and the scientifically literate from this book.

A word of advice for the second edition of the book, if ever planned. While Saroj Butani's translation is fine as far as the language goes, the technical supervision over the translation is wanting. For example, for the term "integral" spin, the word full has been used. Similarly Grand Unification has been written as Great Unification, technical terms like "flavour" "quantization" etc. have been translated as "savour" "quantification" etc. There are other errors too like the statement on p. 69 that five of the quarks have not been revealed. The fact is that five have been revealed.

The second book on genetics is written more in the nature of a first person account of an unfolding story—the story of the development of the field of genetics, as the author says, from the pre-1970 reductionist perspective of genetics to the modern day genetic engineering and biotechnology. It may appear a bit terse for the uninitiated but for the informed it has a fund of information, particularly the course that this growing field has taken in the last four decades to confront humanity with false perceptions of monsters and, what with the multi-million dollar human genome project that is even agitating scientists' minds, eugenic and racist research.

In both these works under review a common thread that emerges is that knowledge is far from complete. . . . Uncertainty haze and invisibility confronts, whether it is in the microphysical world of quantum theory a la Heisenberg or the macrophysical universe itself.

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While learning how to analyze DNA, biologists have also learnt to manipulate it, and modify it at will. They transplant DNA into bacteria, plants and animals. Will they intervene in the genotype of man? Are a new family of Parcae going to intevene in the thread of our lives? These are the questions that bother the public at large.

It is to the credit of the author, who is a molecular biologist by profession and heads a centre of genetics and molecular biology in France, that as he goes along he takes care to dispel many of these misplaced notions but at the same time cautioning where caution is due and that is in the incompleteness of our understanding of some aspects of heredity, biology and evolution.

To quote the author: "In the uproar over genetics and its applications I do not recognize the profound truths of my profession. What I hear being discussed is more often than not quite strange to me . . . . Let us break the circle of ludicrous speculations and recognize calmly the irrational reactions. . . . Outside any realistic perspective, it is the idea of modifying the species and the alleged transmissible and irreversible character of this modification which agitate our minds. But our fears are misdirected. Large reserves of dangerous products, of fatal chemicals and nuclear arms are stored in various parts of the world. While very real dangers hang over us, based on the political decisions of countries, or chance accidents, we are anguished over the idea of future and improbable changes in species, resulting from gene manipulations."

In both these works under review a common thread that emerges is that knowledge is far from complete. Scientists are still seeking. "And they find it hard, increasingly hard," in the words of Casse; quite the opposite of what Marcelin Berthelot, in the 19th century, had said: "The universe no longer holds any mystery". Uncertainty, haze and invisibility confronts, whether it is in the microphysical world of quantum theory a la Heisenberg or the macrophysical universe itself.

Is it the only possible universe or is it the best of all worlds? Uncertainty and randomness confronts the scientist. Similarly in the making of the biological species was Darwin right? As Kourilsky observes, the recent discovery of diverse paths of mutation and their properties encourage us to avoid a narrow vision of the evolution of species. There is no proof available that these are the correct paths, or this is the only possible universe, except that an increase in complexity is the normal fate of scientific developments. It is here that the importance of such books lie and these two live up to those expectations by bringing down the complex to the comprehensible. ❑

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Experiences Evaluated

S. Shukla

ON BEING A TEACHER

Edited by Amrik Singh

Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd., Delhi, 1990, pp. 208, Rs 150.00 (hardcover)

As the editor's introduction points out, it is surprising that in a country of 34 million teachers, few, if any, books set out to review and evaluate the experience of teaching. Feminists and many others discovered only recently with equal shock that the woman's and housewife's view of the world had not been articulated for millenia! We take some activities—and those who undertake them—for granted, value them less than due and reward/remunerate them even less. Nor are they articulate/powerful enough to take these matters in hand themselves. Until the worm turns. And then the expression is not always "reasoned" or "reasonable" and not always in the form of words and ideas alone. While teachers' movements to which most authors in this volume are allergic have expressed the teacher's view in one form and the vast multitudes of teachers express themselves in everyday work as well as day-to-day expressions of feeling and understanding, Professor Amrik Singh has put together in this volume reflective understandings of sixteen eminent as well as typical teachers. There are none from schools and rather fewer from among working college teachers or women than one could have wished. But there is a strong flavouring of the varied reality that Indian higher education is.

Madhu Kishwar's frank avowal of not only the reality of the near peripheral college and its student milieu from the lower reaches of ability and middle class society but also of her credo of teaching them to become themselves in a real society rather than teaching them English literature would represent one pole of our situation and Bhabatosh Datta (economics) and Andre Beteille (sociology) striving for intellectual excellence in Calcutta's Presidency College and the Delhi School of Economics respectively would represent the other. Kranti Jujrekar teaching chemistry in a Bombay college is hardly radical like Kishwar but brings very sensitive awareness of the situation in mofussil colleges and of such pedagogic issues as the development of laboratory skills and learning problems of students from many strata to our attention. One misses the active, even militant, teacher trade unionist, quite a good proportion of whom are also conscientious teachers, though one does feel impressed by the passion of Sidhu who defied fellow teachers on strike to persist with his classes. Vice-chancellors in the volume also are a varied group. Upendra Baxi who vividly perceives the many tasks—radical, conservative, transformative—in the university as much as in life, M.S. Gore who notices and works his way through the sometimes conflicting demands of teaching, research and actual social action, V. Rajagopalan's clear enunciation of how good new teaching methods and extension are important, M.V Pylee's account of how to combine responsibilities such as adviser to students' unions with teaching and research and J.N. Kapur's recounting of summer schools for teachers to upgrade their knowledge of mathematics are but a few illustrations of the wide range of experiences in teaching in post-Independence India. C.T. Kuriens' account of developing new field and research-oriented directions in a basically residential "good" college as also McLeod's strivings for historiography or Wakhlu's examples of field and research bases for engineering teaching exemplify the efforts of competent and conscientious teachers to broaden and deepen the contours of their subjects in instruction.

We find numerous references to how students respond to sincerity and attention. The dilemmas and dichotomies between eloquence and erudition, research and teaching, administration and academic work, attention to students viz. to the subject, the articulate student and the one who wrote well and problems of personal (professional) development of teachers in their work are brought out in varied circumstances and from many points of view. Some perspectives are, however, missed. While it is, indeed, true that teachers' salaries have improved and also that some normlessness has grown among teachers, it would have helped to see the other side of the coin as well. J.N. Kapur's mention of delay in the payment of salaries, rare in his prestigious college, and some other contributors' recognition of the material and status deprivation affecting teachers are only very mild reminders of a very real problem. As, among others, Harold Gould (Rudolph and Rudolph (eds): *Politics and Education in India* OUP 1968) demonstrated in his study of schools in Faizabad over two decades ago, private managements' use of educational institutions as resources is widespread. And as Nirmal Singh's *Education Under Siege*? (Delhi, Concept 1982) based on Kanpur colleges illustrated, as have many others, much academic malpractice emerges from managerial sources. And most young teachers in metropolitan towns cannot afford a place to live in even if the couple both work. The deprivation, insecurity and professional anguish of the teacher, particularly in the highly politicised and now economically polarised environment (in which most of the teacher's peers would rather be civil servants and managers) form the background affecting the basically academic and professional questions to which the contributors essentially pay attention. One would have wished for a clearer picture of how all this affects our essential concern—teaching and learning. This is all the more important in a situation where the teacher finds himself/herself (it is interesting to find Upendra Baxi always using the feminine gender!) far behind the civil servants, and technical/managerial professionals even in the areas he is supposed to teach! For, the equipment, the travel, the exchanges come to him/her much less than they should or they do to the others.

What does the book end up saying to the reader? Teachers differ from one another, in what they think teaching is, in the way they learn how to do it and in the circumstances in which they do it. The experience of dealing with young people in the context of knowledge and skills and helping them to grow into them is a demanding and at the same time, if the problems are not too insurmountable, a satisfying one. There is complementarity but also tension in attending to student's growth as people and their growth into knowledge and learning. A similar relationship obtains between disseminating learning i.e. teaching and advancing it i.e. research. Our higher education has the tradition of concentrating on teaching to the exclusion of the other two functions. Over the past forty odd years since Independence these new growths have come up at points, but under rather adverse conditions (of which one does not find much mention in the volume). The goals and how one sets about achieving them, overcoming difficulties posed by one's own deficiencies as well as by circumstances are, however, very well brought out.

This work is a tribute to its editor, the one man institution, Professor Amrik Singh. Likewise, this review is offered as amends for failing to contribute, something one did over a quarter of a century ago, when he was editing the pioneering *Journal of University Education* on behalf of the Federation of Central Universities Teachers Associations. In this book Professor Amrik Singh has achieved in ample measure what the reviewer usually failed to, as honorary editor of the University Grants Commission's *Journal of Higher Education* for fifteen years, getting distinguished academics to write about their teaching. They are usually too busy teaching or advancing their discipline! ❑

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Can do Better Verse

G. J. V. Prasad

SINGLE WOMAN
by Tara Patel

THE SERENE FLAME
by Makarand Paranjape

THE ATTIC OF NIGHT
by Anna Sujatha Mathai

MY WORLD
by Tabish Khair

Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1990, pp. 63, 81, 72, 72 respectively, Rs. 40.00 each.

New Poetry from Rupa is a welcome venture. For far too long have Indian poets in English been dependent on their own purses and/or the patronage of a few established poets to give their creative efforts a (library) shelf life of some kind, to bring themselves to the notice of serious readers. It is only if more publishing houses take up publishing Indian poetry in English and in translation from various Indian languages that a critical milieu can be given a chance to develop. Rupa's entry into this field is a big leap for Indian English poetry because Rupa can also ensure accessibility through their wide distribution network.

It is another question altogether whether the four volumes under review should have been published at all—or at least in their entirety. It is not that these poets lack potential, but their poetry is inconsistent and on quite a few occasions their language fails them. There are many good things in these volumes but one cannot help feeling that it is the next books by these poets that should have been published—not these.

Of these four poets, the two women—Tara Patel, and Anna Sujatha Mathai—make a far greater impression than the two men—Makarand Paranjape and Tabish Khair. This seems almost inevitable in Indian English poetry with women poets finding in English the freedom to deconstruct or destruct with passion the various Indian worlds that they come from and/or inhabit (this is more true here of Tara Patel). The passion, the immediacy of their writing, sets the Indian women poets writing in English apart on a plane which few of their male counterparts even aspire to reach. The poor men can in comparison only appear timid.

Take Tara Patel's *Single Woman* for instance. The quality of verse may at times leave a lot to be desired, but the intensity of writing—the immediacy of experience and expression—helps to overcome many obstacles. As the title suggests, all these poems examine and express the life and longings, the desires and frustrations of single womanhood in India. Remaining single is seen as both the answer and not the answer to the problem of womanhood in India—"A woman's life is a reaction/to the crack of a whip" ("Woman"). But when you opt out of the performance you end up "a yogi in the wilderness of civilisation" and still dream "anyone could have touched the baby-smooth skin with kisses"

> *. . . . what dismayed this reviewer was the need felt either by Rupa or by these poets to gloss any words they use from Indian languages (including word like "sindoor!") even when the meanings are made absolutely clear by the context. . . . This lack of cultural confidence is difficult to understand, to say the least. Especially since it can cripple their poetry. Which would be a pity. Since they all have potential and can realize it if only they would not rush into print. Otherwise it could be "publish and perish" for them*

The various facets of this dilemma—wanting companionship but not the attached strings which it does not seem to come without, living one's own life but not liking the loneliness—are explored in poem after poem. There is a deep yearning for a life of passion, a life of the senses, and for an ever-available companion. Being single seems to preclude the joys of living. But there seems to be no choice. "You dream in a system programmed to punish you" ("Of Dreams, Gods and Goddesses") though "You never thought you were a woman/ till you counted one son of a bastard,/ two, three,/ and then stopped counting". This is a world where a woman needs "a new reason everyday/to be alive" ("To be Alive"), a world which "is not your oyster", a world where all "men are bastards,/ until proved otherwise".

Many of these poems examine frustration as well as the need for emotional companionship. In the title poem, "Single Woman", Tara Patel states bleakly that "Even a one-night stand is luxury". Being single is no bed of roses: "A squalor of needs grows fiercer/even as you starve in a permanent fix". The poem ends with "waiting for a man to come naked and/with no price tags attached".

Being alone means your "permanent address is hell" ("To A Poet From Ghana") for the intensity of desire for physical and emotional companionship is such that life seems extremely painful and empty without love or a lover—the want is to "touch you with kisses./Till there is no more pain" ("To A Poet From Ghana"); the want is to have lunch with an ex-lover even if you have to "pay the bill" ("Request"); or to put it with even greater simplicity, "just once you want to be in love" ("A Kind of Freedom").

These are ferociously honest poems and, I am certain, very difficult to write. Poem after poem recounts fears and desires—even nature seems to mock at the single woman with the gul mohurs "crowned lavishly/ with sindoor" ("Summer 1976"). Almost everything seems to trigger off sexual and/or material instincts "taking its toll on me" ("For You"). Such is the feeling of failure that "The passing days have a posthumous/touch to them" ("In a Working Women's Hostel"). The single woman's "particular reality is fear" ("Calangute Beach, Goa") says the poet. But the actual fear with writing such poetry is that lack of control over language and lack of craft can destroy and distort this intensity into cheap and cliched self-pity and exhibitionism. Tara Patel's *Single Woman* escapes this but just.

In comparison, Makarand Paranjape's *The Serene Flame* can only appear timid and pretentious. From the ethnic "Invocation" to Shiva-Shakti and Ganesha, through the self-deprecatory "Prologue" ("Kindly forget all that I have said/In what I realize has been a very prosaic preface"), and the missing poem no. 15, to the coy ("I'd better make a quick getaway/Before I am hooted out by my audience") but self-congratulatory "Epilogue", all that one hears is a series of false notes (poem no. 1, "Proposal", begins with "Mon cherie"—why write French if you don't know the language unless you

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actually wanted to imply the masculinity of the girl!) And this despite the fact that of the four poets under review Makarand Paranjape seems to have the greatest control over the medium.

It is interesting to note that Makarand Paranjape deliberately points our attention to the romantic Hindi movie—"meditate on Raj and Nargis -/Not so much in real life as in the movies—or to bring myself up to date,/Yash Chopra's latest fantasy, *Chandni*, enacted by inimitable Sridevi" ("Prologue")—as a possible influence, distancing himself even further from the subject at hand. The implication is that all is role-play in these love poems to his wife. So references to Hindi films, as reinforcement, is to be found in other poems in this volume. There is a poem titled "Separation in an Art Film" and a poem to Lata Mangeshkar and her sister Asha, "Latasha". "Latasha" makes this point explicitly—"The high-priestess of love remains a virgin"—these are only poems, do not see the man here (how far from Tara Patel!). "Like Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi" refers to that hit song of yesteryears—"Chalo ek baar phir se, ajnabi ban jaayen hum dono". And the book ends with a reference to Bulleh Shah quoted so approvingly in that hit film about puppy love—*Bobby*. It would have been so easy to forgive this book if it had been one of adolescent outpourings!

But there are a number of good poems here. "College Days" with its refrain "It is only love, nothing else" works very well. So do "The Magic Lantern" "Hauz-i-Khas" and "P.S. Venus Serenus". There are evocative images and quotable lines in "Walls" "Treadwill", "Maya" "Getting Outside Patriarchy" ("Our distances are intimate,/ We grow vast in our silences"), "Her Strategy", "The Third", and "She and He" ("To be a woman is to hold sway/To be a woman is to be the source. /To be a man is to seek, to venture, to define—/ And to find one's annihilation in woman"). Humour peeps through "The Seven Year Itch" and leavens the sheer sensuality of "Eyes"

Anna Sujatha Mathai's is a more mature and a much quieter voice. But not a complacent one. Through this collection, *The Attic of Night*, runs an awareness of the world that overlaps the writers's—a world of poverty, pain, and hunger, both physical and spiritual. Love and companionship seem to answer some of the problems—in "My World", "the whole city blind and built of stone" is transformed when "You—leaned your head against my shoulder". The poet calls in this poem, as in others, for the breaking down of isolation, of "the silence within the airconditioned cars"

Pain, poverty and hunger are seen to be universal but brought home more poignantly in this country "Full of shining myths/ And starving children" ("Of the Death of Kings and Others"). This is the country of "Unwanted babies, illicit desires," where "If you touch the raw edge of/ life's jagged surfaces/You get wounded" ("Ishvari's Voice"). The children of the slums, the raped women, the mutilated child—the only answer seems to be "madness, /Unknown address in a different country". But no, there is always another answer, another possibility—love, the "only armour" ("Mandala"). This love is true Christian compassion—when "Hunger screams from every hoarding" "the only bread that satisfies/is ordinary human compassion" ("Hunger").

But this is an indifferent world where at best "Families are boats where/strangers cling together" ("Families"). A girl's grandmother can put out the light in her face by ordering marriage teaching the lesson that "she who seeks light, Must learn to walk in the darkness,/ On her own road". ("Light"). The world carries on with its not so divine comedy without caring for the sufferings of "the living things,/ that are caught in its crevices/ and fissures". ("On the Beach at Baga")

This is a world where "parallel lines cross" ("journey"). You cannot remain unaware of the suffering of others—"the faces of the poor" do "Peer through the windows/ And will not be obliterated". But we are conditioned to "hide the food we eat, /Turn our backs to the hungry". We are a lost people without compassion—"We do not know/Our destination"

It is only in death that we seem to unite ("In Tiruvella"), life is full of partings and desertions ("Coming Running Jumping"). We are all "Guests, who/go away still aching/With hunger" ("On Seeing *Julahe*"). The poet strongly argues for a sense of community, for love and compassion as the only possible answer, however uncertain the outcome may be "Suddenly I want to take the/ whole world upon my lap/and kiss away its tears" ("The Last Supper").

Of these four, Tabish Khair (*My World*) has the greatest potential. Khair, it is another matter that Tabish does not realize his potential in this volume! This is a true first book which it need not have been. He will soon learn the value of editing, rewriting and heartless rejection. He has to. He has to question "twittering birds" and the temple bells that shriek. He has to work at his diction and his poetic style. Staccato lines can be as sloppy as meandering ones.

But he is capable of striking images—"There are hills near my house, wearing a halo of eagles" ("My Town") and, more importantly, of sensitive poems—"House with the Grey Gate", "Report of an Incident", "The Homecoming", "Notes, during Communal Tension in the Town", "My World", and sections of "My India Diary"

His is the craft of the diarist—recording impressions of incidents however trivial they may seem, always hoping one day to make sense of the gathered data. And therein lies the problem for the reader—what do you do with a diary which is not of gossip value, which does not afford you voyeuristic pleasure? The data too is still raw and only a nugget here and there of interest. But a poet who can write of his town that "to tear away your roots/wrench free/I will have to take myself apart/ brick by brick" ("My India Diary, I") is definitely capable of more.

Finally, what dismayed this reviewer was the need felt either by Rupa or by these poets to gloss any words they use from Indian languages (including word like "sindoor!") even when the meanings are made absolutely clear by the context. Makarand Paranjape goes to the extreme of using only the translated versions of Hindi film songs in his poems—"Chalo ek baar" is actually rendered as "Come, once more,/Let us become strangers,/To one another...." The Hindi version is not given at all! This lack of cultural confidence is difficult to understand, to say the least. Especially since it can cripple their poetry. Which would be a pity. Since they all have potential and can realize it if only they would not rush into print. Otherwise it could be "publish and perish" for them. ❑

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Of Wings and Chain

C.S. Lakshmi

DAFFODILS ON FIRE AND OTHER SHORT STORIES
By Mridula Garg
National Publishing House, 1990, pp. 147, Rs. 100.00

The stories in this book are about limits and boundaries, of trying to leap over; of giving in; of winning and losing. It is about people caught in a web of temporariness, or if it exists at all. People in the stories here are constantly trying to break out, seeking and looking, not knowing if what is sought is the alternative they are looking for. Some of them hold on to fragments; some withdraw and some enter a different kind of void. A flower, a word, a gesture, a glance, a touch would do for some of them to make life livable but these seem to be at unattainable heights. The tallest of them have to bend their long slender necks to be cut, the fastest who can scale mountains have to fall, the physical reality of life binding them, defining them and holding them. Often the breath itself binds and life and death get blurred and become one.

Mridula writes with a passion and agony that has within it compassion and empathy although it seems ruthless and merciless. She strips people naked to reveal their oddities but she also strips them to look for beauty; for a kernel of hope to accept human life as it is. Her characters like Mrs. Dutta are afraid to know who they are. "People are afraid of unwrapping a gift parcel. Mrs. Dutta was afraid of herself. There were layers upon layers of wrapping. She was scared to start unwrapping..." (p. 137) Mridula sets them free; she makes them go up glaciers before they descend down to the familiar earth with its set ways. Mridula looks at her characters caught in relationships without forcing herself upon them. With a distance that seems philosophical she lets them be—some move out; some continue and some choose death wit a casualness that hurts, as it if is an extension of life. But she takes them along for flights of fancy laden with poetry and laughter; filled with daffodils and snow away from the ordinariness of every day life. A life, where fifty miles away from Bhopal the clouds have turned unromantic; where people die standing for there is no time to lie down and contemplate upon death. A life, where houses become large and small or posh and ordinary depending on the gaze of the viewer.

Mridula's stories do not have convoluted endings or beginnings. Sometimes they are not stories at all. Just works on her stories like a painter, with just a few strokes, a line here and there and a blob of colour in between at times. She succeeds mostly but there are some stories that lie flat on the canvas not emerging out of it. "Not For Sale" for example. It is about a woman daring to penetrate into what is normally considered a man's domain. She doesn't want to be sold in the marriage market like an item for sale. She wants to feel more than just a commodity. I can forgive her urge to turn into a buyer herself at the end of it all. But the story makes it appear that success for a woman has loneliness in store and this aspect of the story seems not sufficiently explored. There is loneliness in life like the way the character in her story "Time" feels; as if she is a victim of time, a non-living person. But when one links it with something as specific as a career, the linkages assume new meanings. It is one thing to say that there is an essential loneliness in the lives of some people—may be all of us—even the housewife in "Time" feels it. But it is totally something else to indicate that even when one breaks away one has to face loneliness finally. There is no redemption. It makes the act of breaking away seem unnecessary and without meaning.

I like the way Mridula merges her characters together wiping away lines of demarcation of gender, space and time. Everything gets blended into one and many. They are all different and yet they are one and the same. Where does one end and the other begin? What is it that really separates persons? Are we really so different? These are questions that float in the mind when the book is put down. The sexuality of her characters she deals with directly with no undue emphasis or exaggeration or frills. And in some stories she makes a friendship—a sharing—possible either symbolically like in the story "To the Glacier" or openly like in "A Date With Me" or poetically like in "Daffodils on Fire"

The flap says Mridula is "poetic, ironical, intense and erotic." These are dull phrases one can use for any writer and don't quite do justice to Mridula. What Mridula really is, which cannot probably be put into the language of flap-writing, is a person with a heart. Her words don't look as if they have poured out of a word-processor expertly handled and controlled. Her words seem to arise from life, sometimes in abandon and sometimes twisted and out of shape. She can show one daffodils blooming and daffodils singed in fire; she can take you to heights of snow for a sledge-ride and pull you back. Mridula recognizes wings and chains and certainly knows where she is going, stumbling and flying but never stopping. ❑

C.S. Lakshmi is a well-known Tamil writer and has specialized in Womer Studies.

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In the Twilight Zone

Kasturi Kanthan

SHADOWS IN DREAM-TIME

By Indu K. Mallah

Affiliated East-West Press Pvt Ltd, 1990, pp. 145, Rs. 30.00

Ms. Indu K. Mallah has given us a very real life-like representation of a woman with an insecure background, tormented by memories.

The little girl, Swapna, affectionately called "Baby" by her warm and loving mother is unfortunate enough to lose her early. She then has to set aside the memories of her mother "who was plump and soft and warm and cuddly and disorganized and always so full of fun and laughter" and contend with a "stepmother with her thin long face, her pinched lips, her humourless personality, her machine-like efficiency and her martyred mien". (pg. 23). Then come the step-sisters—Jyoti and Chaya who upstage her unconsciously, at the emotional level. Neglected, misunderstood and unwanted, Swapna (no longer "baby") manages to survive and finds contentment and fulfillment in her marriage to Amar. Her earlier nightmares, anxieties and fears are all completely erased by the sheer magic of her husband's love, care and concern. She blooms literally into a confident and charming woman with two children—"a happy family with a father and a mother, a son and a daughter" (p. 112).

But halcyon days do not seem to last. Amar dies of a heart attack while Swapna is on a visit to her brother's house, filling her with a sense of guilt as well as loss.

With the death of Amar, Swapna's life grinds to a halt. The author presents the anxieties and complexities of a widow in the conservative South Indian society with a certain intensity. The South Indian ambience is well sustained. Lonely and forlorn, Swapna oscillates between resentment and envy, anger and anguish, resignation and revolt. She begins to cringe and her confidence is steadily eroded. Encouraged by her brother, she accepts a job in Madras, lives in a hostel and attempts to resurrect a life of dignity and independence.

Kasturi Kanthan is a lecturer in the English Department in Lady Shriram College.

Troubled and uneasy, she seeks solace and support from two people who seem to have shared a similar experience: Sangeetha, her room-mate, who is ridden with guilt about the death of her twin, Nrithya, in a motorbike accident, caused by her exuberance and carelessness; Satyan, her colleague who has lost his wife and child in a car accident. In her bewildered state, the concern and attention of Satyan become important to Swapna. However, before she can awaken wholly to this new emotion, her dreams come crashing around her when her daughter Maya withdraws from her and her son turns to alcohol for assuaging his grief and is subsequently expelled from college. At this point Swapna, who has been teetering on the brink, keels over, has a nervous break-down and finally seeks her release through a fantasy world and then into the ever-after.

❖

There is a fine portrayal of the marginalization of women especially widows—when Ammi puts the "vibhuti" (sacred ash) on her, when Swapna stops short of reaching out for kumkum and takes the "Vibhuti"

❖

The novel has a tripartite structure. Part I is subtitled "Flames and Ashes". This graphically describes the consuming fires of resentment and envy that crush her spirits. Disprited and defeated, the ashes of Swapna's desires taunt her after her husband's death.

The second part traces an attempt made by Swapna to take faltering steps towards becoming an example of an urban, independent, single woman. Fittingly titled, "Broken Wings" the second part shows her struggling against customs, attitudes and irritations. Her progress in Madras is illuminated with painful reality. She spreads her wings, hesitantly, uneasily, uncomfortably—she tries to soar but is dragged back by the weight of the existing social fabric. Conflicting with social institutions she tentatively stretches her hands towards Satyan, kumkum, jasmine flowers, maroon and vermilion tints. She is brought back to the earth with a rude thump by Satyan's deceit. The reader too is equally shocked by the twist in Satyan's character. Nothing in the novel prepares us for this and I wonder whether it was withheld even from the reader only so that Swapna's disillusionment is strongly emphasized. The other blows are struck by Madhu and Maya. Happy families is now only a game of cards (p. 112)

The third part "Voices at Twilight" is a searching description of the breakdown of Swapna's mind. The veneer of daily living is scrapped and Swapna, as her name suggests moves into the twilight world of hazy memories, figures and references, of dreams and fantasies. Her mind darts through days of hurt and neglect in childhood, the quiet withdrawal of the "gawky little girl" who "hovers at the penumbra of the warm family circle for the visitors are her s tepmother's relatives." (p. 126).

Swapna agrees simply and clearly "I've dislocated my mind". (p. 123). Slowly, deliberately, the last action of Swapna's is a defiant one. She wears her wedding sari, flowers, jewellery and kumkum as she prepares to join her husband. She discards the hateful white, realizes the illusory quality of this world and moves towards the after-time. Cleverly, the three parts are brought together in the penultimate sentence of the novel—"the voices in the wind are sobbing, black wings flutter frantically in my breast, and the flames turn to ashes" (p. 145).

The novel is primarily a sensitive delineation of the tortuous workings of Swapna's mind. The silent taunts of colours, flowers, her stepmother s intimate gestures (p. 3), the importance given to Gomathi as against Swapna (p. 39), Jyoti waiting impatiently for her husband, Ramu's telephone call—these intensely real and felt experiences are graphically translated into words.

There is a fine portrayal of the marginalization of women, especially widows—when Ammi puts the "vibhuti" (sacred ash) on her (p. 3), when Swapna stops short of reaching out for kumkum and takes the "Vibhuti" as she remembers "her altered status with a fresh stab of pain" (p. 16), or when the groom's party come to see Sumathi, and Swapna is asked to stay behind and she realizes "that as a widow, and a newly bereaved one at that her presence in the forefront of an occasion like this was considered inauspicious" (p. 39). There is

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trikingly poignant episode in the house of her nds, Rukmini and Sridhar when she realizes iends who had once been so warm and cordial, ddenly cool-off, as though their security is reatened by the presence of a lone woman in the inity (p. 93). In fact, Swapna's disintegration is ainly because she cannot accept wholly the old ard advice of "transfer all your joys, hopes and eams onto your children "(p. 25). Unknow-gly, unconsciously, her desires are surging ead. For the "New Woman" reader of the 90s to hom this novel caters, Swapna's weaknesses d frailty can be defended as archetypal of the all-town (Mangalore and Salem), educated girl ossoming out into the urban executive wife, ing in a metropolis. Her new confidence is built n the shifting sands of her earlier complexes so at later it crumbles easily. The sense of being drift is sharpened acutely when the anchor of curity is suddenly withdrawn. The novel traces minute detail the mundane rhythms of a widow ndemned to slow "social sati"—the emerging w independent woman is not yet strengthened Swapna and therefore she breaks.

This paradoxical conflict in Swapna is stressed the skilful use of irony in names e.g. Amar (the mortal one) dies young, Satyan (Truth) de-ives her, Sowbhagyavati (The fortunate one) is ddled with an unfaithful husband; Madhu Honey) adds bitterness to Swapna's life. Even e images of the restless ocean, the fluttering rds, the thrashing of the windmills etc, only add iteratingly to this conflict in Swapna's mind. he references to clips or memories of films also eave in the underlying patterns of thought e.g. Ordinary People" touches on the idea of guilt nd coming to terms with tragedy (p. 104), or as e vultures wait to get Gregory Peck in "The nows of Kilimanjaro" Swapna's fears also hover lently around her (p. 130), or the reference to fumu living with the dead Madame Rosa, "in e twilight world between reality and illusion" . 141) or that chilling reference to "one flew over e cuckoo's nest" with that lucid awareness when wapna asks "Am I, too, headed for the cuckoo's est?" (p. 133).

With this cohesive structure of the novel, there one jarring note and that is the extensive use of uotations which mar the easy narrative flow. he quotations are not invested with an easy or cile quality, they do not seem to integrate natu-lly with the thought processes. They in fact eem laboured and it is as if after deciding on the uotations they have just been squeezed in super-uously. Also one wishes that Swapna was given nother chance not in an urban context but in a uiet manner to deal with her life (in may be alem) but with the healing power of music which he enjoys and understands. One wonders why hat idea is aborted even before it can take shape.

Notwithstanding all this, this is an eminently eadable novel. ❑

Publishing in India: A Vibrant Scene

URVASHI BUTALIA

1990 was a year full of bad news for publishers. Paper prices shot up—great leaps and jumps with which it became difficult to keep up—wave after wave of agitation, particularly in north India, led to closures and disruption of schedules, which, in turn, meant that hardly any purchases were made as universities were closed for the crucial three months; publishers found themselves with at least half a year's unsold stock on their hands. Postal rates went up, making it more difficult for books to be sent by mail and, as if all this was not bad enough. India's position in world publishing declined from seventh to seventeenth.

Yet, speak to publishers and many will say the year wasn't a bad one after all. Universities may have been closed in much of north India but bulk purchases by the states made up for some of that; bookfairs held all over the country (many organized by the National Book Trust and others by local Publishers' Associations) helped readers to actually have direct access to books, not only in English but in the Indian languages as well, and the fairs in some way offset the steep rises in postal rates; the increase in the rate of the pound meant that fewer publishers were keen to import books. And the villain of the piece, the government, responded to one of the many demands publishers had been making by setting up a National Book Development Council, supposedly to look at policies related to books. All in all, say some, a pretty fair year.

Can we then say that the book trade has—to use a stock phrase—really come of age, the more so as it seems to be able to weather such difficult storms as 1990 brought and still emerge bouyant? Does this, in fact, mean that the pattern of book buying is changing—from the traditional market being in educational institutions—and that more individual buyers are buying more? Perhaps that people are reading more?

The truth is that there are no clear answers to these questions. Publishing and the book trade must be one of the worst documented industries (if one can even call it that) in the country. No one quite knows exactly how many books India publishes in a year, or indeed how many publishers there are in the country. Figures for the latter vary from between 2000-3000 active publishers (with the number of books in English ranging from 30-50 per cent) and the former can be anything between 17,000-20,000 books a year. Even these are based mainly on UNESCO statistics which, in turn, are compiled from books registered at the handful of copyright libraries in the country, and, not surprisingly, many publishers don't bother to send in their books, with the result that figures reflect only those that have been recorded. Similarly, although Delhi has seen nine World Book Fairs and there have been many National Book Fairs all over the country (not to mention the Calcutta Book Fair which stands in a class by itself), we still have hardly any information on sales during these fairs, nor any comparative figures for how they have increased or decreased over the past two decades or so. Thousands of copies of books are imported into India each year but, while this is a cause of great concern to many Indian publishers, there is hardly any information on the publishing turnover of imported books (including reprints) as compared to locally produced ones.

How, then, does one begin to write about this trade? Given the absence of data, any 'analysis' can, at best, be merely impressionistic. Some things, however, are known: that the bulk of Indian publishing (where the money is) is concentrated in the educational sector. Books for schools and universities, published by both the private and public sectors (the latter's output is said to be anything between 20-40 per cent of the total) account for the major part of sales in India. This is not surprising, the more so for English publishing in this country which, in fact grew alongside and as a result of the system of education introduced by the British in the nineteenth century. Starting up initially in the mission presses and schoolbook societies in India, and then 'at home' in England, English publishing gradually expanded in India as English medium education became the norm. It is because of this that trade publishing, i.e. publishing of general interest books, has always formed such a small part of publishers' lists: indeed all publishers will assert that approximately 80 per cent of the market for books in India lies in libraries and institutions, with only 20 per cent or so being with individuals.

It is on the individual market that the handful of small publishers who have begun to make their mark on the world of English publishing, have based their success. Seagull, Ravi Dayal, Thema, Garutman, Penguin India, Kali for Women and, more recently, Rupa—publishing trade or general interest books, all of these publishers have built upon the tradition begun by veteran houses such as Asia (now no longer in existence), Vikas, who really brought the general book into circulation, Hind, responsible for the introduction of the mass market paperback, and others. More, they have succeeded in creating a space in the Indian reading world (and this is no small achievement given how small this world is) for Indian

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■ ECONOMICS

Indian Social and Economic Development 1990: An Index to the Literature—Compiled by CENDIT (Centre for Development of Instructional Technology), with the assistance of CAPART (Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology). A comprehensive abstracting and indexing service for all those engaged in the development processes, this is the third volume in the series. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 195.00

Privatisation and Public Enterprise. The Asia-Pacific Experience—Geeta Gouri (ed.). A pioneering effort to portray the strategy of privatisation in vogue in the Asia-Pacific region, this volume traces the genesis of privatisation to joint failures of state as well as market. Sponsored by Asian & Pacific Development Centre and the Institute of Public Enterprise. Oxford & IBH Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1991, price not stated.

South Asia and World Capitalism—Sugata Bose (ed.) Comprising seventeen studies by historians, sociologists, economists and political scientists, this book attempts to locate South Asian history within broad Supra-regional and world contexts, as well as within the historical debates and theories that analyse the shape of the modern world. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs 325.00.

Indian Shareowners: A Survey—L.C. Gupta. This book presents the findings of the first All-India Survey of Indian Shareowners, covering their growth, profile and preferences. Society for Capital Market Research and Development, 1991 Rs. 180.00

The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: Nanchilnadu: 1880-1939—M.S.S. Pandian. Based on primary and secondary sources as well as oral histories, this study which seeks to overcome the methodological inadequacies of the mode of production debate will be of interest to scholars and development planners. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 175.00

India: The Emerging Challenges: Essays In Honour of Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao—M.V. Nadkarni, A.S. Seetharamu & Abdul Aziz (eds.) The book seeks to provide an inter-disciplinary and holistic perspective on the dynamics of social and economic change in India and the challenges faced by her. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 199, Rs. 325.00

When the Harvest is In: Developing Rural Entrepreneurship—Shailendra Vyakarman (ed.) In this collection of studies the contributors discuss the problems which beset rural communities as they attempt to develop non-farm production at the same time as ensuring a constant food supply. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd, 1990, price not stated.

Bokaro Steel Plant: Some Economic Aspects—Sutinder Bhatia. An attempt to arrive at the results of economic investigations as approximate to reality as possible makes this book a useful guide for policy planners and managers in the steel and other sectors of Indian industry. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1991, Rs. 210.00

Trade Liberalization In the 1990s: Vol. 8; Aid and External financing in the 1990s; Vol. 9; Joint Ventures and Collaborations: Vol. 9—Hans Singer, Neelamber Hatti & Rameshwar Tandon (eds). These volumes are part of the New World Order Series. Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 700.00 each.

Public Policy and Economic Development: Essays in Honour of Ian Little—Maurice Scott & Deepak Lal (eds.). The authors of these essays, all well-known economists, provide pointers to help and influence policy-makers in areas crucial to the economies of developing countries. Clarendon Press & Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 275.00.

Energy. Economics—Deb Kumar Bose. Research in Economics: Second Survey—Monograph 1. Indian Council of Social Science Research, 1989, Rs. 25.00.

■ RELIGION AND CULTURE

Religion in Modern India—Robert D. Baird (ed.) This composite book contains 19 papers contributed by academics, most of them committed to the study of things Indian and concentrates on two areas of study, namely religious movements and religious thinkers. This is a second and revised edition. Manohar Publications, 1991, Rs. 300.00

A Glossary of Indian Religious Terms and Concepts—N.N. Bhattacharya. This book seeks to explain the basic significance of various terms and concepts which characterize different religious systems in India. Manohar Publications, 1991, Rs. 450.00.

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writing (much of it fiction) in English. Using their professional competence, which is considerable, these houses have combined initiative and a spirit of adventure with straight dealing and a love of books and, most of all, a commitment to their work which has paid dividends. Perhaps not particularly significant in terms of size—some publish as few as five books a year—they are certainly significant in terms of reach and impact, something that becomes even more interesting when we look at the areas they have chosen to publish in: performing arts (Seagull), Indian writing in English (Penguin and Ravi Dayal, both with a dash of non-fiction thrown in), translations (Garutman and Kali), women (Kali), resistance writing (Thema), and, most surprising of all, poetry (Rupa), an area that most publishers steer clear of because they feel it is simply not marketable! None of this is what might be called 'popular' stuff.

But these are not the only changes on the Indian publishing scene. In recent years publishing has become a somewhat 'coveted' profession. The fact that now along with job satisfaction (which was usually held up as sufficient reason for people to want these jobs), one can also hope to earn a little money, has meant that more and more young and dynamic people have become attracted to it and are entering the profession to stay, not just using it as a stepping stone. Both within the newer publishing houses and in the established ones, these younger professionals have brought in new ideas, new ways of working, a spirit of adventure, all of which have helped to enliven the publishing industry.

Then there's the other group of publishers, the more established ones, some of whom straddle the rather blurred line that often exists between what are known as 'academic' and the more general books. Among these number the Oxford University Press, Allied, Manohar, Sage and others, all of whom add to making the publishing scene in India so vibrant today. But, while English language publishers of social sciences and humanities (the distinction is important because there is a whole world of scientific and technical publishing that seldom gets talked about) have begun to turn their attention to local writers and to originate books in India, other branches of the book trade have been rather less adventurous. Apart from locally produced educational books, big business still comes mainly from imported books (for the UK and the USA India is their second or third largest export customer for books and we import more than $18 million worth of books from the UK alone in one year). A considerable number of remainders—mainly junked books in the west, sold at huge discounts to dealers here,—come into the Indian market, and these two kinds of imports (the legal and the less legal) are what fill most of our bookshops.

Nonetheless, there's cause for hope: because more and more good books are being produced locally, and because they are in fact selling through the few bookshops that do stock them, publishers are beginning to feel that there is a relatively unexplored section of the market here, and one they can reach with a certain kind of quality book. Hope lives eternal! ❑

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Kundalini and Meditation—Arjun Das Malik. This book brings into focus for the first time the unique phenomenon of *Cit-Kundalini* which induces mystic trance and enables the soul to take a quantum leap beyond the mind and experience the bliss of Moksha. Manohar Publications, 1991, Rs. 100.00.

Islamic Art and Spirituality—Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This is the first book in the English language to deal with the spiritual significance of Islamic art—the plastic arts, literature and music. Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi & Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 300.00.

■ WOMEN STUDIES

Gandhi's Contribution to the Emancipation of Women: Aloo J. Dastur & Usha T. Mehta. Based on the speeches and writings of Gandhi and interviews with prominent personalities in India and abroad who came under his magnetic spell as well as critics of Gandhian thought, the author seeks to study the impact of Gandhi's personality and views on the emancipation of Indian women. Popular Prakashan. Bombay, 1991, Rs. 100.00.

Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History—Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid (eds.) The anthology attempts to explore the inter-relation of patriarchies with political economy, law, religion and culture, and to suggest a different history of reform movements, and of class and gender relations. Kali for Women, 1989, Rs. 200.00.

A Space within the Struggle—Women's Participation in People's Movements—Ilina Sen (ed.) The essays in this collection seek to address the misconceptions about the size and scope of popular representations of the women's movements in India. Kali for Women, 1990, Rs. 160.00.

The Powers of Tamil Women—Susan S. Wadley. This volumes seeks to contribute to the rather sparse literature on the subject of Sakti as the female generative force of the universe and the true nature of Hindu women's power and its meanings for their life styles. Manohar Publications, 1991, Rs. 175.00.

■ URBAN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Slums and Urbanization—A.R. Desai & S. Devdas Pillai (ed.). A new edition of the study comprising over fifty chapters on different aspects of shelter for the poor. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1990, Rs. 350.00.

The Politics of Urban Development; A Study of Old Delhi—Ajay K. Mehra. This book examines the interface between society and politics involved in plans for urban renewal. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991, Rs. 185.00.

■ POLITICS & HISTORICAL STUDIES

Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order—Vol. II—Francine R. Frankel & M.S. A. Rao. The second of a set of two volumes in which scholars of political science, sociology and history adopt a common set of concepts to analyse patterns of change in the ideological and structural foundations of dominance in India from the colonial period to the mid-1980's. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 260.00.

The Nehru Legacy: An Appraisal—Amal Ray, N. Bhaskar Rao & Vinod Vyasulu. This volume is based on the proceedings of a national seminar on The Nehru Legacy organized by the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, in February 1989. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd, 1991, Rs. 195.00.

Kashmir: Behind The Vale—M.J. Akbar. The author delves into the history of Kashmir and the identity and culture that has blossomed within the ring of mountains for thousands of years and seeks to explain why that harmony has disintegrated, leaving the path open to secessionist aspirations, Viking, & Penguin India, 1991, Rs. 250.00.

Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in Northern India—Sandria B. Freitag. The book offers provocative new insights into the one of the central problems of modern Indian history—the Hindu-Muslim conflict. The author challenges long-standing interpretations by defining this conflict as a developing social process involving complex and contradictory participation by numerous social groups in highly specific local contexts bound together in a changing institutional order. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 250.00.

Nationalism and Communal Politics in India—Mushirul Hasan. Based on painstaking research, this perceptive study would be found useful by all those interested in the history of nationalist movement and the vexed question of communal politics in India. Manohar Publications, 1991, Rs. 300.00.

The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the development of a Nation—Stephen P. Cohen. This book is an interpretation of the history of the Indian Army in the light of contemporary approaches to nation-building and development theory. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs 200.00

■ LITERATURE & FICTION

Four Graves and Other Stories—Manohar Malgaonkar. Fifteen stories from one of India's finest story-tellers. Penguin Books, 1990, Rs. 60.00.

Carvalho & Men of Mystery: Two Novellas. K.P. Purna Chandra Tejasvi. Translated from the Kannada by Padma Ramachandra Sharma. *Carvalho* is the story of the quest for a mythical beast that is reputed to live in the dense jungles surrounding the tiny village of Mudigere. *Men of Mystery* tells of three mysterious individuals trapped by rain and impassable roads in an isolated farmhouse near the Ugragiri mountains, Penguin Books, 1990, Rs. 65.00.

The Light from Heaven: A novel. Kasthuri Sreenivasan. An explosive novel that lays bare the perverse and vitiating effect of caste on Indian Society. Penguin Books, 1990, Rs. 65.00.

Partition: Sketches and Stories—Sadat Hasan Manto. Translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan. A collection of thirty-two cameos and reflections on the 1947 massacres. Viking & Penguin Books, 1991, Rs. 125.00

Once a year it is March and Other Stories—Achla Bansal. A collection of stories from a prolific writer. National Publishing House, 1991, Rs. 90.00.

■ MISCELLANEOUS

Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and the Significance of his Movement: A Chronology—Compiled and edited by K.N. Kadam. A useful reference work for those interested in Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to the advancement of the downtrodden. Popular Prakashan, 1991, Rs. 100.00

Sherpas: Reflections on Change in Himalayan Nepal—James F. Fisher. Foreword by Sir Edmund Hillary. Seeks to study the impact of modern education and mass tourism on contemporary Sherpa society and their views on their collective future. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 275.00.

Conservation in Developing Countries: Problems and Prospects—J.C. Daniel & J.S. Serra. This book is based on the proceedings of the centenary seminar of the Bombay Natural History Society. Oxford University Press & BNHS, 1990, Rs. 400.00

Selected Works of M.N. Roy: Vol. III: 1927-1932—Sibnarayan Ray (ed.). Much of the writings in this volume have been translated for the first time from German into English from the archives in Europe. Oxford University Press, 1990, Rs. 365.00.

Law of Consumer Protection in India—D.N. Saraf. This book critically examines the basic principles of major consumer laws. N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 175.00.

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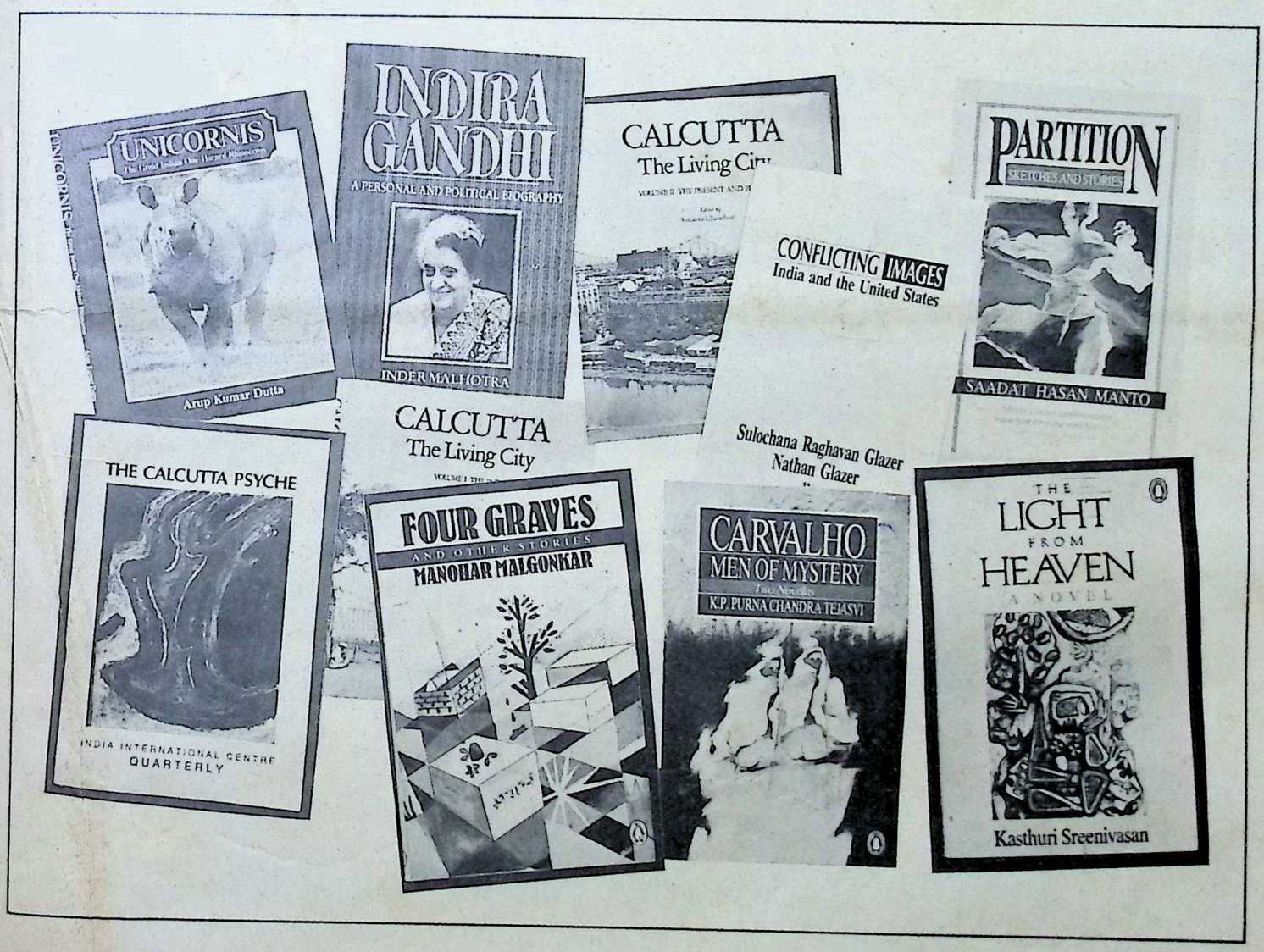

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विरासत जो हमारी ही नहीं पूरे भारत की है. . . .

मध्यप्रदेश, हिन्दुस्तान का दिल है और हिन्दुस्तान की आत्मा यहीं रहती है।
इस बात का सबूत है यहाँ हर जगह पायी जाने वाली इतिहास की
विरासत–जिसमें प्रचुरता है, निरंतरता है और श्रेष्ठता है।
भीमबेटका के लाखों बरस पुराने शैल चित्र देखें, सांची के स्तूप देखें या बाघ की
गुफाए–सब में झलक है–हमारी सभ्यता और वर्तमान जिंदगी की।
कुछ जगहें यदि, मौर्य, शुंग, सातवाहन, गुप्त, प्रतीहार, कलचुरी परमार वंशों की
विरासत है, तो खजुराहो हमें चंदेलवंशियों की याद दिलाता है।
प्रदेश के हजारों ऐसे स्थलों में से एक है–भोरमदेव।
नागवंश के छठवें राजा गोपाल देव के राज में आज से कोई एक हज़ार साल
पुराने इस मंदिर में शिव की प्रतिमा स्थापित है।
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भारतीय इतिहास और जीवन का प्रतीक
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The Book Review has since its inception in 1976 been run purely through the voluntary efforts of its founder members and friends for financial and managerial support. With the journal now having secured for itself a niche in the book world, the time has come to place its management and financing on an institutional footing. A Trust has now been set up to administer the journal.

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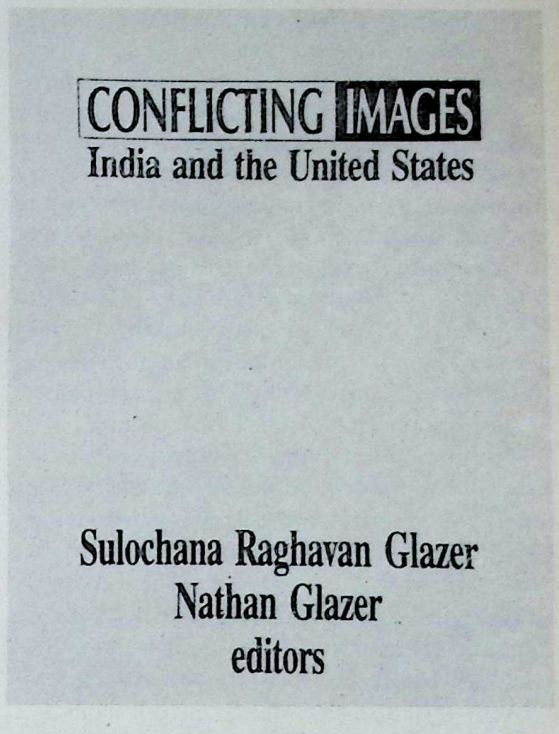
Scratches On Our Minds

A.P. Venkateswaran



CONFLICTING IMAGES: INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES

Edited by Sulochana Raghavan Glazer and Nathan Glazer

The Riverdale Company Publishers, 1991, pp. 307, Price not stated.

The mind of Man is the measure of things. There is no truth to be had beyond the impressions made on Man's mind," said the Greek historian and philosopher Herodotus, more than two millenia ago. This statement remains as valid today as it was then.

One of the most troubling features of Indo-US relations is the distortion in perception of each side about the other, despite the many factors they share in common, not the least being the democratic values to which they subscribe.

Many years ago, the first empirical study of American perceptions about India and China was conducted by Professor Harold Isaacs of MIT. Appropriately named *Scratches on Our Minds*, it was a pioneering work which established beyond doubt how the views of even an educated and enlightened elite can be based on nothing more than casual encounters or just hearsay. In many cases, stories heard in childhood from elders get embedded in the subconscious and become the firmly held opinions of people after they have grown up into adults. This tendency is all the more where the cultures are very different, either attracting or repelling the observer according to his temperament and predilections. It is then just one step from there for these impressions to condition the responses of people in positions of power, thereby affecting their attitudes at the macro-level, as it were, from the micro-level.

An interesting finding by Professor Isaacs in his study was that Americans, as a rule, tended to be more favourably drawn towards the Chinese than the Indians. Moreover, those who were confirmed sinophiles were strongly negative to India and Indians. As Professor Glazer remarks in his introduction to the work under review, "The research in the book is more than thirty years old, and much has changed. But since it provides the most penetrating searchlight into the informed American mind on India it is worth consideration, and I believe much in it, in particular, the striking contrast between attitudes towards India and China, still holds." (page 13)

Nothing illustrates the persistence of these prejudices more than the comment by the well-known China scholar Professor John Fairbank of Harvard University, who, in his autobiography *China-bound: A Fifty-Year Memoir*, states without any qualms, that his impression of Indians was of "timorous cowering creatures, too delicate to fight like the Chinese", as against the Chinese who are "vigorous and smiling, and the greatest contrast to the lassitude and repression of the Indians". (page 14)

Yet another American East Asia expert, Professor Edwin O. Reischauer, who had served as US ambassador to Japan, confessed that travelling in India in 1960 after seeing "the swarms of beggars and the constantly outstretched arms of pathetic children demanding baksheesh added to the culture shock". He was at least intellectually honest enough to state: "I realised I had already stretched my capacities as far as they could go intellectually and emotionally in trying to understand East Asia, North America and Western Europe, and could stretch them no further to include India. Philosophically, India had always represented for me the opposite end of the human spectrum from East Asia—It seemed to me that almost to the extent I understood East Asia, I was incapable of understanding India." (page 15)

Conflicting Images: India and the United States is a collection of essays written for a conference sponsored by the Centre for International Affairs at Harvard University in 1986. The contributors include a number of distinguished American as well as Indian academics, scholars and journalists. The contributions have been divided into three major sections: (i) The International Setting: Democratic Ideals and Cold War Realities; (ii) India and America: Encounters of Religion and Culture; and (iii) The Larger World of Comparison.

The editors are a husband and wife team who are eminently suited for their task. Professor Nathan Glazer is a well-known educator and sociologist who teaches at Harvard University. Sulochana Raghavan Glazer, who has been working in the field of Indian-American Relations, was responsible for organising the conference where these papers had been presented. It is no surprise, therefore, that despite the thesis and anti-thesis approach implicit in the various contributions, the editors have successfully managed to bring about a synthesis of sorts.

The real divide in the Western and Eastern way of thinking lies in the fact that the occidental mind is always looking for clarity, something tangible to hold on to, whereas the oriental mind thrives on paradoxes and feels comfortable with the intangible. It is, perhaps, this basic distinction, suitably buffered through the academic language which is used, that stands out most clearly in the book. No wonder then that in his excellent Introduction, Professor Glazer has necessarily had to take recourse to quoting extensively from Indian and American sources about their respective perceptions of each other, leaving the reader to draw his own final conclusions.

For example, take the inherent contradiction in democratic thinking which stresses that the majority has the right to rule by virtue of numbers. Surely, the same yardstick would not be applicable in adjudging the superiority or rightness of the stand taken in any of the sciences or the arts. Why then should it be different in politics? Even if one assumes that numbers are decisive in politics, would then their application to the whole world as a single constituency be acceptable? Would the affluent countries then be prepared to accept the demands of those who are less affluent, on that basis? These are questions that flow logically, but will obviously never be acceptable even to the most fervent advocates of democracy.

Generally speaking, the Indian attitudes as reflected in the respective contributions tend to be defensive and apologetic, as against the American attitudes which are critical and patronising. Professor Venkataramani sums this up well when he

A.P. Venkateswaran is a former Foreign Secretary and has served in the United States. He is currently Research Professor in the Centre for Policy Research.

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refers to both Indians and Americans as being "virtuosos in verbosity and ring leaders in self-righteousness." (p. 38) Obviously, like poles repel!

Professor Selig Harrison puts the same idea more mildly when he speaks about "mutual perceptions and communications blockages rooted in differences of cultural and religious tradition and of social patterns". (p. 46) However, even a scholar of his eminence makes the cardinal error of describing the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) as representing "a concept of equi-distance", which is not true at all, although he quite rightly decries the tendency of Indians to place "over-emphasis" on the importance of Super Power rivalry.

In any case, this argument would seem to be not relevant any more, with the advent of President Mikhail Gorbachev on the Soviet scene. This reviewer is inclined to agree with the assessment made by Professor Venkataramani at a Carnegie Endowment seminar in 1982 in which he stated: "Shorn of rhetoric, the central issues hampering meaningful relations has been the continuing reluctance of the United States to accept India as a country of major importance in the world arena, a country that has the makings and potential to be one of the handful of major powers of the 21st century." (p. 62)

Similarly, in the essays on nuclear proliferation in South Asia, the discriminatory aspect of the NPT is altogether missed in the American contribution by Peter Galbraith. After all, the Bible itself proclaims that it is more difficult for a rich man to enter Heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Why then should it be presumed that poorer countries acquiring nuclear-weapon capability cannot behave as responsibly as the richer ones who already possess that capacity?

As N. Ram pertinently points out, "Exaggeration in assessments and policy response, such misperceptions and such departures from the principle of equality in international relations must be avoided in the future by the United States decision makers, and also by those in the democratic arena who are supposed to influence them." (p. 103)

Sometimes one almost despairs whether humanity can ever attain that level of honest objectivity which alone can bring about the humility required for straight dealing with each other.

Suffice it to say that in today's world, for the vast majority it is a question of applying the proverb: "Where you stand depends on where you sit." Each person chooses consciously or sub-consciously to view events in the perspective which suits his, or her, interests. Nothing else matters. This is what also explains the escalating battle which is currently going on for control over peoples' minds. The Information Revolution brought about by satellites and dish antennae threaten increasingly to overwhelm our sensibilities. More and more people are left with no time to think on their own. They are bombarded, round the clock, with what passes superficially for news, but which, needless to say, includes massive amounts of misinformation and disinformation. An Orwellian scenario, indeed, which must be resisted with all the power at our disposal.

In this battle for the mind, the advantage lies with the richer and stronger countries. Take, for example, the television programmes beamed over satellites to most countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Africa, the bulk of the programmes originate from the USA and Western European countries. In Latin America, the same percentage originates from the United States. The situation in regard to Asia is a little better, but in a number of countries the percentage of intrusion is not much less. We must remember that it is these images which will eventually mould the thinking of the young people in these continents, for better or for worse.

In the exchanges relating to religion and culture, Professor Diana Eck focusses on the sense of alarm created in the minds of the established Christian Churches in the USA about the inroads made by Indian gurus like Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Swami Rajneesh who had gained a large following, as well as the growth of organisations like Iskcon. These developments have been extremely disturbing to many in the Establishment in the United States who are vulnerable to their own "deepest fears and imaginings arising from the encounter with another world-view". (p. 137)

Professor Myron Weiner has made a valuable contribution in assessing the impact of the Indian community in the United States, now in excess of half a million, which could have acted as "a natural bridge between the two countries". As he evocatively puts it, it is really a question of "brain drain versus brain gain". His conclusion, however, is rather restrained since he believes that "it is more likely that the US relationship with India will shape the politics of the Indian community in the United States than that the community will influence American-Indian relations". (p. 254)

Professor Jagdish Bhagwati and Professor Padma Desai while making a comparison of the US attitudes towards China and India, speak of the kaleidoscopic interaction which keeps changing, and which is affected by the US-China-Soviet Union triangle, but with the balance of advantage in favour of China.

The well-known indologist Professor Lloyd Rudolf traces the historic links and the influence of Indian and American thinkers on each other, from Thoreau to Gandhi to Martin Luther King, as well as the contradictory responses of Americans to Mahatma Gandhi and his teachings, and draws some interesting cultural paradigms. And, of course, Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* finds ample mention for the lop-sided picture it projected, provoking Gandhi himself to describe it as "a drain inspector's report". But as Professor T.N. Madan says: "Cultural difference does not entail conflict nor does it mean unbridgeable distance, but, if those concerned are not careful, it could shape into hegemony. This, after all, has been the history of East-West cultural relations." (p. 195)

Turning to Indian perceptions about the United States, it can be said that the politics of the subcontinent has played a bigger role in shaping them than any other single factor. In particular, the perceived US tilt on the side of Pakistan over Kashmir and a host of other issues. The US perceptions about India have similarly been coloured by the conviction that India is a client state of the Soviet Union. Now with the developing detente between the USA and the USSR, and the new contradictions emerging between Pakistan and the United States, there is a likelihood that at least some of these negative perceptions may gradually disappear. But what may replace them is anybody's guess.

There is little doubt that if a referendum were to be taken in India and the question is posed as to which country is admired the most, and where the Indians would wish to emigrate if they so wished, 80% or more would vote in favour of the United States. However, if the same referendum were to ask the question as to which country has stood by India in her time of need, a similar high percentage would opt in favour of the Soviet Union.

In the final analysis, therefore, while one should be concerned about how others see us, the real issue is how we see ourselves and what our real goals are. Life is cyclical. That is what the Dharma Chakra represents in the Ashoka pillar, which is the national emblem of India. Countries which are on top today will have to decline over a period of time, just as countries which are below now, will move up. There is no need at all to succumb to a feeling of despondency, nor to be overwhelmed by what others may say about us.

President John F. Kennedy declared in his Inaugural Speech many years ago that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. In the final analysis it is the inherent confidence of Indians in their own capacity to achieve, and not any fresh induction of foreign aid, which will help to see them through.

The very size of India's population, which, more often than not, is seen as a great liability is also our greatest asset. A bucket of water can go stale, but a lake of water never will because it regenerates itself. So too with the vast reservoir of talent that exists in India, waiting to be tapped and harnessed for the betterment of the people of the country as well as of the world at large.

Conflicting Images: India and the United States is distributed in India by Manohar Publishers and Distributors. It should be of considerable interest to everyone who is concerned about the sorry state of Indo-US relations and the need to improve them. ❑

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Partial Glimpses of Pakistan

PRAN CHOPRA

'AKISTAN'S POLITICS: THE ZIA YEARS

y Mushahid Hussain

ndian edition by Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1991, p. 293, Rs. 100.00

The author is among the best known names in "contemporary writing" in Pakistan, a phrase used here for the reason that his writing activities lie astride the fields of oth conventional journalism and the newer brand f journalism which is published in the form of ooks though in spirit and content it resembles urrent affairs commentaries in newspapers.

Mushahid Hussain was also a distinguished ditor of *The Muslim* of Islamabad which, under is editorship, often came close to dissent. That as in the days when the Zia regime, which is the eme of the present book, was at its height; dis- nt carried the taste of adventure in those days. efore he left the newspaper and it relapsed into e state in which many newspapers are in Paki- an (and were in India too, only far more so, uring the Emergency period), *The Muslim* be- me the forum for several major debates on many ajor themes in the history of Pakistan, including e 1965 and 1971 wars with India, the roles of hina and the United States in both instances, and e controversy on whether Jinnah intended Paki- an to be a secular or an Islamic state. The con- butors included some of the best names in the untry and, in the case of the wars, many among ose who were high up in conducting them.

One mentions all these facts about him because ey are also reflected in the contents of the book. e refers to some of these controversies such as the o wars, the role of the army in the politics of kistan, the nature of Pakistan, the views of the unding father and the differences among the ccessors. But unfortunately the quality remains t of contemporary writing and lacks the depth history one normally expects to see between the vers of a book.

As a consequence one catches glimpses of the ility of Pakistan, not its true nature and roots. The book as a whole reads more like a collection of articles which were conceived as articles and not as an analysis in perspective.

He mentions, for example, that the army has reserved for itself the right to intervene in the conduct of the state and to take over whenever in its judgement such action may appear to be necessary for the sake of Pakistan. Such are the "rules of the game" in Pakistan, he says, though he does not add that the army, as the umpire, also reserves the right to change the rules in the midst of the game. He also recalls that Bhutto was the first leader who forged an alliance of the rural and urban poor and the middle class intelligentsia. The only other political alliances which have been able to rise to the reins of office (never power—PC), whether under the patronage of the army or on its sufferance, have been alliances between the rich of both these categories.

But he does not go into the root cause of this phenomenon, and the root cause is that for all that it has been an independent country, and a proud one at that, Pakistan has been under powerful external influences in the matter of the conduct of its foreign and external security policies, and in the matter of domestic politics has been very nearly a colony through much of its life since its formation in 1947. That is why it has been possible for the army to play the role it has played all along and why it has not been possible for democracy to take root, without which there can be no viable alliances of the people which may keep the army out of civil politics.

One looked forward to reading a discussion of this root problem in the chapter, "Agitation and Electoral Process". But this turns out to be largely an account of a few events in 1983 and the concerned personalities, not the underlying causes. This is not surprising, because it was meant to be read contemporaneously, as a commentary on the day's events. This is also why in a book published in 1991 the year 1983 is described in the present tense and the year 1985 is referred to as a future year upon which much would depend but little could be foretold.

Similarly the chapter "State and Society" also does not live up to its promising title. It is an assemblage of a number of newspaper article length commentaries on a variety of subjects, not an analysis of the state of Pakistani society and its influence in shaping state politics. Where it discusses the role of the army it confines itself to the power of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) within the army and the army's command structure. But it is only in an analysis of Pakistani society at the birth of Pakistan that one can discover the reason why Pakistan did not take the democratic path, while India did, despite the similarity in the political experiences of the peoples of the two countries during British rule.

The tragedy of Pakistan at its birth was that it became a colony for all practical purposes. With one exception, the pre-partition movement for the creation of Pakistan was not led by the leaders of the Muslims in what was to become Pakistan, but by the leaders of the Muslims of what was to become the successor state of India. In fact on the eve of the partition, all the major leaders and parties in what was to become West Pakistan were opposed to Mr Jinnah personally and to the Muslim League. Even the idea of Pakistan was not very popular with them. The only exception was East Pakistan; but that, for reasons to which I will come later, became an added cause of the inability of democracy to take root in Pakistan.

It is sometimes argued that Pakistan's chances of becoming a democracy were stultified by the deaths, in quick succession, of the first President, Mr Jinnah, and the first Prime Minister, Mr Liaqat Ali Khan. It is true that both died in Pakistan's infancy. But it does not follow that if they had not, Pakistan would have become a democracy. They

> *It is important to understand that the coalition of various forces that brought the PPP to power in 1970 and which was based on an alliance of the urban poor in Punjab, the rural poor in Sind, plus the rural poor and urban middle class of central Punjab, has now ceased to exist. . . . The Left-Right polarization which was an important feature of politics during the 1970 elections is also absent, with both the Left and Right lacking credibility.*
>
> *From* Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years

an Chopra is a former Chief Editor of The States- n *and now visiting professor at the Centre for Policy earch.*

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In the popular mind, a national conspiracy theory has evolved over time, which boils down to a fundamental belief that all changes of government in Pakistan are usually possible only after a nod from CHQ or a wink from Washington. This view also reflects a basic reality, namely, the kind of power structure that we have in Pakistan and the degree of foreign interference in the internal politics of the country.

From Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years

both enjoyed the respect of the people of Pakistan but neither had his roots among the people of either wing of Pakistan. Therefore, neither was interested in making Pakistan a democracy because neither would have been confident of winning elections against West or East Pakistan leaders and parties which were the product of their respective soils.

The leaders of East Pakistan certainly desired democracy. But they were at a double disadvantage. Neither national level leaders of Pakistan who had migrated from India, nor the locally based leaders of the Western wing were willing to have any political system which would enable the people of East Pakistan to rule the country by virtue of their superior numbers. Therefore, East Pakistan became, in a sense, a colony within a colony—just as the leaders who had migrated from India denied democracy to the people of Pakistan, so did the leaders of West Pakistan deny democracy to the people of East Pakistan.

The same thing happened at the level of the bureaucracy. Most of the top civil servants, including two who became Presidents, Mr Mohammed Ali and Mr Gulam Mohammed, had their roots on the Indian side. This added to the natural disinclination of any bureaucracy to hand over power to the elected representatives of the people. In these circumstances was born the first power structure which ruled Pakistan for a time, a duopoly between the civil servant and the politician, in which the former had much the upper hand because the politician lacked his natural armour, support among the people.

It was inevitable that sooner or later the armed forces would demand a share of power, and that they would get the lion's share of it because they controlled the ultimate sanction, force. The armed forces of Pakistan are not a representative cross-section of the country's society, as they are in India. They constitute a distinct social segment of their own and are a competing entity. Most of them are drawn from about half-a-dozen districts of West Punjab and NWFP. They did not identify either with the politicians who had come from India, or with bureaucrats who were either drawn from pre-partition India or from the central districts of West Punjab, that is around Lahore, which are very different from the recruiting grounds of the armed forces. Being distinct, they had the ambition to claim a share of power, and being armed they got the biggest share.

But this tendency was accentuated by the biggest external influence upon Pakistan, the United States. The tensions in the domestic politics of Pakistan might have resolved themselves in favour of democracy, once the western wing accepted that the eastern wing must have a share of power in proportion to its share in the population. But that possibility was foreclosed by the intervention of American strategic interests in the domestic politics of Pakistan. The United States had little interest in whether Pakistan became a democracy or not, and even less interest in whether the people of East Pakistan got their due share of power or not. It was mostly interested in the territory and the military of West Pakistan as a link in the chain of military capability which it was building up against the Soviet Union. This led to powerful external investment in the domestic political dispensation in Pakistan, which gave complete ascendency to the armed forces, the power to set the rules of the game, and to assume power directly in their own name whenever they found politicians or bureaucrats to be getting inconvenient. The army was happy enough to use the politicians–bureaucrats duopoly as a front for the army's own power, as is the case at present, with President Ishaq Khan being the super bureaucrat and Nawaz Sharif the junior political partner. But the army will never willingly accept the duopoly, let alone democracy, as a competitor of military power.

Without this background it is not possible to understand the four main features of the "Zia Years". The first is the ease with which President Gen. Zia could control the army, the politicians and the bureaucracy, in such a complete way and for so long. The second is his experiment with Islamisation, the so-called Nizam-E-Mustapha. The third is his adventure against Afghanistan. And the fourth his peace offensive against India.

Democracy got a chance to raise its head in West Pakistan only after the central pillar of the anti-democratic power structure, the armed forces, suffered two successive setbacks in 1965, when its gamble against India failed; and in 1971 when it became the primary cause of the secession of East Pakistan. Thus the 1970s, which may be called "the Bhutto Years" became a clear warning to the triumvirate that outside their cosy coterie a new power and an independent force was astir which could demolish the coterie if it got a chance. Hence the willing acquiescence of all members of the triumvirate (and its supporters in Washington when Pakistan again became useful for USA because of the developments in Afghanistan) to give Gen. Zia all the backing he needed to keep the lid on democracy, and after Zia's death to clip Benazir Bhutto's wings before she could learn to fly, and then to back Nawaz Sharif because of his record of being properly respectful towards the other two members of the triumvirate, the President, Mr Gulam Ishaq, and the real power and Army Chief, Gen. Aslam Beg. Since then an added advantage for Nawaz Sharif has been his ability to defuse the powerful anti-American sentiment which came up over Iraq.

President Zia tried to give a garb of legitimacy to his rule in the form of a degree of popular backing, by inaugurating the allegedly Islamic polity which he named Nizam-E-Mustapha. But he only discovered that despite all the emphasis placed upon Islam in the creation of Pakistan, the people were no more willing to endorse a military mullah than they were willing to endorse political mullahs, and just as they never gave much electoral support to fundamentalist Islamic parties, they were not willing to honour a fundamentalist regime created by a general.

Gen. Zia then tried the next gimmick, of clothing himself in politico-military glory by trying to bring Afghanistan under the strategic suzerainty of Pakistan. For this he used the double approach of appealing to Islamic sentiment at home, in Afghanistan and among the member countries of OIC; and fomenting civil war within Afghanistan with the help of the Afghan Mujahideen (among whom also he strongly favoured the fundamentalist Hikmatyar). But because any adventure to the west of Pakistan required a quiet frontier on the east, with India, President Zia also kept up a sustained peace offensive against India. In part this was recommended to him by the Americans, because they realised that undisturbed relations with India were necessary if Pakistan was to be of any use against Afghanistan. But later this became a part of Zia's own strategy also when he began to entertain ambitions against Afghanistan independently of America's changed policies. This led to such a deep diversion between the role perceptions of the United States and Pakistan that when Gen. Zia died in a mysterious accident it came to be widely believed in Pakistan that he was bumped off under an American plot. But be that as it may, Gen. Zia's death and the suspicion became an uncomplimentary epitaph on "the Zia Years" because it meant the failure of its military aspects just as its political aspects had failed already. ❑

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Analysing Macro-economic Issues

M.V. Nadkarni

PUBLIC POLICY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF IAN LITTLE

Edited by Maurice Scott and Deepak Lal

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. xviii + 396, Rs. 275.00

Professor I.M.D. Little in whose honour the essays in the volume are written is well known for his contributions to analysis of problems and policy of trade and development in developing countries and to applied welfare economics. It is, therefore, fitting that the essays are in this field. Even his early work, *A Critique of Welfare Economics* (1950), was an attack on a purely theoretical approach of relying too much on marginalism and "first best" analysis and prepared the ground for better informed and theoretically sounder policy formulation and analysis. His famous work (with J. Mirrlecs as the second author) *Manual of Industrial Project Analysis in Developing Countries*, particularly its second volume on *Social Cost Benefit Analysis* (1969) was also an equally significant event. It provided a practical guide for project analysis for both developing countries and aid givers. Even if it generated some controversy, particularly about the suitability of using world or border prices as shadow prices, it proved to be very popular. Though subsequently Unido's Guidelines for Project Evaluation (1972) was advocated as an alternative more relevant for developing countries, the consensus now seems to be that both amount basically to the same approach, and the initial resistance to using border prices has weakened. Professor Little's later work has been more and more directly on policy issues in developing countries, and especially critical of a blind pursuit of import substitution and obsession with industrialisation regardless of its costs. He is still active and productive. Seton's "Salute Inter Pares" pays a fitting tribute to this great scholar. The book includes a comprehensive bibliography of Professor Little's publications covering a wide range of themes.

It is not surprising that the essays in the volume broadly share his philosophy and views, and also his approach in so far as it is rooted in rigorously reasoned, even if established, theory without abandoning practical relevance. They are all excellently argued and presented, and should be quite useful to scholars and policy-makers alike. What is more, their in-depth and thorough-going analysis has hardly come in the way of readability and lucidity and should be enjoyable reading even outside the circle of professional economists. The contributors are all distinguished economists, most of whom also had opportunities of actively advising on policy matters and of being associated with government and international bodies.

State interventions in developing countries, either in the name of reducing poverty or of promoting economic growth and self-reliance, have not always achieved their objectives, due both to faulty design of public policy and poor implementation. A critique of public policy in such countries and an analysis of conditions for its success should therefore be very useful, which is what the volume here presents admirably well.

We often tend to take it for granted that governments act in a way as to maximise the common good. But what does really influence policy, considering that in its formulation and implementation several parties and interest groups are involved? Are the political leaders and bureaucrats who form the government machinery simply puppets responding to the best advice of experts, particularly economists? Or, do they act primarily in their own self-interest, and not so much according to the advice guaranteed to secure maximum social good? (In fact, in the midst of conflicting advice from several sources, it is difficult to decide a priori which indeed is the best advice, and the "best" advice to be accepted may well be subtly ordered to suit the interests of those who pay for it.) Does policy really benefit the intended beneficiaries? Is the policy decided after taking into account alternatives available and the relative costs of these alternatives? These indeed are political economy issues of state intervention and public policy.

Two papers in the volume raise these issues—one by Anne Krueger on American controls on sugar and the other by Jagdish Bhagwati on the political economy of foreign investment, both cases being illustrative. They are easily the most appetising papers in the volume, and are taken up here first though they are sandwiched in the latter half of the book. Both give a useful review of the different viewpoints or theories of this new political economy before they present their own analysis and findings.

One of the revealing findings by Krueger is that sugar control involving trade barriers on imports from developing countries, was full of "mistakes" in the sense that "various parties on not infrequent occasions took policy stances that turned out, at a later date, to be against their own self-interest". (p. 174) The paper presents two "lessons" at the end which are noteworthy: (i) measures advocated by economists, once enacted, will have a life of their own, often beyond their utility and original intention; (ii) "in choosing between alternative policy instruments, there should be a strong presumption in favour of simple, transparent instruments: the likelihood that these instruments can be seized in ways unacceptable to a comprehending electorate would be reduced". (p. 214)

Analysing foreign investment, Bhagwati shows how it is used by the investing firm or the government of foreign investing firms to reduce the threat of protection against its own exports in the country receiving investments. This could be by offering a share in the profits from investment to a politically powerful domestic firm. This is called quid pro quo investment by Bhagwati. By endogenizing the government and its policy, instead of treating it merely as an exogenous factor, new and valuable insights are obtained.

A political economy perspective is found useful by Deepak Lal too in his interesting paper, "International Capital Flows". As is well known, private capital, though unstable, became more important than official flow of capital in the seventies and eighties. He discusses the determinants and effects of capital flows and their forms on development, as also the implication of integration of capital markets worldwide. Such an integration has the healthy effect of inducing the rulers of developing countries "to maintain a domestic economic framework when the state provides the indispensable public goods—law and order, stable money and social overhead capital—for development". (p. 268) He finds that flight capital returns to countries which have provided macro-economic stability and realistic exchange rates, and the threat of capital flight imposes the needed discipline on policy-makers.

There are four more essays on explicitly international economic relations and problems of developing countries. Max Corden deals with the problems of countries which have to reduce the deficit in balance of payments as well inflation rates without adversely affecting employment and output. An interesting part of this analysis is about the distributional implications of such macro-economic adjustments. The paper by Bevan, Collier and Gunning discusses how different countries respond to sudden exogenously induced

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changes in the values of exports and imports. Even where beneficial, countries have not always responded in a way to protect long-term interest and stability as they tended to fritter away short-term gains. Some countries like Indonesia, on the other hand, responded more prudently. Vijay Joshi analyses different exchange rate regimes ranging from permanently pegged rates to freely floating rates. He distinguishes nominal rates from real rates of exchange, and evaluates regimes in terms of achieving real rates at right levels consistent with major objectives of their economic policy. Newbery examines the problems and instruments of commodity price stabilisation. He argues that more than the conventional tool of buffer stocks, a judicious use of borrowing and lending, future markets and international financial instruments can be less costly in stabilising consumption.

Gerald Meir offers a critical analysis of the experience of import substitution policies in relation to development. After the early phase, when it was applied as an instrument to overcome the balance of payments problem, the countries faced stagnation and even tighter foreign exchange constraints. But some countries, building on the base developed, launched themeselves into an expert promotion phase with considerable benefits in terms of a fast rate of growth of productivity. John Page also presents an analysis of the experience of industrialisation in developing countries, and laments the fact that in many such countries economic growth took place much more through input growth than through an increase in productivity. India is an illustration of this case recording practically no increase in total factor productivity, and South Korea offers an opposite example which combined economic growth with increasing productivity and efficiency. Needless to say, the latter could do extremely well in export promotion.

Sudhir Mulji's insightful paper shows how public sector management in India failed in being efficient enough since the principle of autonomy was sacrificed at the altar of accountability. He offers a circular system of ownership of public enterprises as a solution, where "A owns B, who in turn owns C, who owns A". (p. 149)

Other papers too are no less interesting. While E. Ahmad and N. Stern lay down principles of taxation for developing countries, taking into account both distributive and growth considerations, Maurice Scott presents a very useful account of the principles and method of social cost benefit analysis. G. Ohlin's essay, "Population Enigma", makes for refreshing reading. Deepak Mazumdar's paper, "Government Intervention and Urban Labour Markets in LDCs", drawing partly from his own earlier work, offers valuable new insights into the labour markets and wage levels. He challenges the widely held view that state intervention amounts to a wage subsidy to the formal sector restricting employment expansion there. He finds that though wages are higher in large firms, there is no "dualism" since there is a continuous gradation of wage levels. According to him, there is also no simple choice between a modern (capital-intensive, large-scale) and a traditional (labour-intensive, small-scale) technique, since there is a spectrum of techniques. Intervention in favour of a particular technique requires a detailed knowledge of their cost-benefit ratios. Not only is such information not available, there have been no attempts to even develop it, deplores Mazumdar.

The last paper in the volume by Angus Maddison is a novel analysis of the differing impact of the colonial burden on different countries, using measures like the net flow of payments, current transfers from colonies to metropolitan countries, and the number of expatriates in the colonies. India seems to have been imposed with a comparatively lighter burden than some countries like Indonesia. There is also an analysis of macroeconomic policies pursued by colonial powers and their impact.

Taking the volume as a whole, its major direct concern is with efficiency in economic management and growth, and is sympathetic to liberalisation and export orientation for the same reason. The need for and nature of direct state intervention and policy required to tackle the problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment and adverse ecological consequences of growth are hardly discussed, though they are issues of vital importance to developing countries. Nevertheless, the volume deserves serious attention, since no policy for poverty alleviation and employment growth could hope to succeed when macro-economic policies themselves leave much to be desired resulting in inefficiency and lack of adequate economic development. ❑

NEW FROM OXFORD

■ **Social Stratification** edited by DIPANKAR GUPTA

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DIPANKAR GUPTA teaches sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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PROFESSOR COHEN is a member of the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois.

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This book explores the complex relationship between ideas, instiution and the people in them by examining a particular case, that of the Rishi Valley School, which is informed by the world-view of the renowned philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti.

DR MEENAKSHI THAPAN is currently Reader at the Central Insiitute of Education), University of Delhi.

Pages 282 *Rs 250* *Demy 8vo* *1991*

■ **Essays in Economic Analysis and Policy** edited by DIPAK BANERJEE

A Tribute to Bhabatosh Datta

This collection of essays brings together some of the finest minds working on economics today, all former students of Bhabatosh Datta at Presidency College, Calcutta. Amartya Sen's essay on the methodology of economics considers the diversity of its concerns and objectives which preclude simple methodological prescriptions. Asok Sen finds the concept of economic man too limited for a satisfactory approach to the problem of economic development. Tapas Majumdar's essay focuses on the choice of the appropriate level of literacy fora devoping economy in a high-technology world. Mukul Majumdar examines the problem of the failure of decentralization in infinite horizon economics and proves the impossibility theorem for such non-stationary environments. Jati K. Sengupta extends the Farrell efficiency concept to multiple outsput models to make it more useful to economic theory. Tapan Biswas examines stochastic dominance theory from a general framework of unanimous ordering of a pair of lotteries by a set of individuals. Alok Ray's essay on the argument in favour of infant industry protection reveals the theoretically unsatisfactory nature of much of the policy making and implementation. Manmohan Agarwal reviews the literature in favour of trade and developmen based on export-oriented and import-substitution strategies. Sanwip Kumar Das looks at the microeconomics of commodity price stabilization and the role buffer stocks can play in a situation of risk aversion in stabilizing the market. Dipankar Dasgupta examines the place given to the effects of high wages upon the rate of private investment in Keynes' General Theory. A.K. Bagchi looks at an earlier period of Keynes' writing and the role he assigned to the gold exchange standard in relation to his support for the Indian exchange arrangments. Pranab Bardhan's essay gives an overview of India's economic performance during the last three decades. The book concludes with Amit Bhaduri's challenging paper which raises doubts about the foundations of dynamic macroeconomic modelling that use approximations which neglect 'second order smalls'.

DIPAK BANERJEE is Professor of economics, Presidency College, Calcutta

Pages 260 *Rs 190* *Demy 8vo* *1991*

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A Tercentenary Tribute from Diverse Hands

Jag Mohan

CALCUTTA: THE LIVING CITY—VOL.I: THE PAST

Edited By Sukanta Chaudhuri

Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 276, Rs 600.00

CALCUTTA: THE LIVING CITY—VOL. II: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

Edited By Sukanta Chaudhuri

Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 364, Rs 750.00, Set: Rs 1250.00

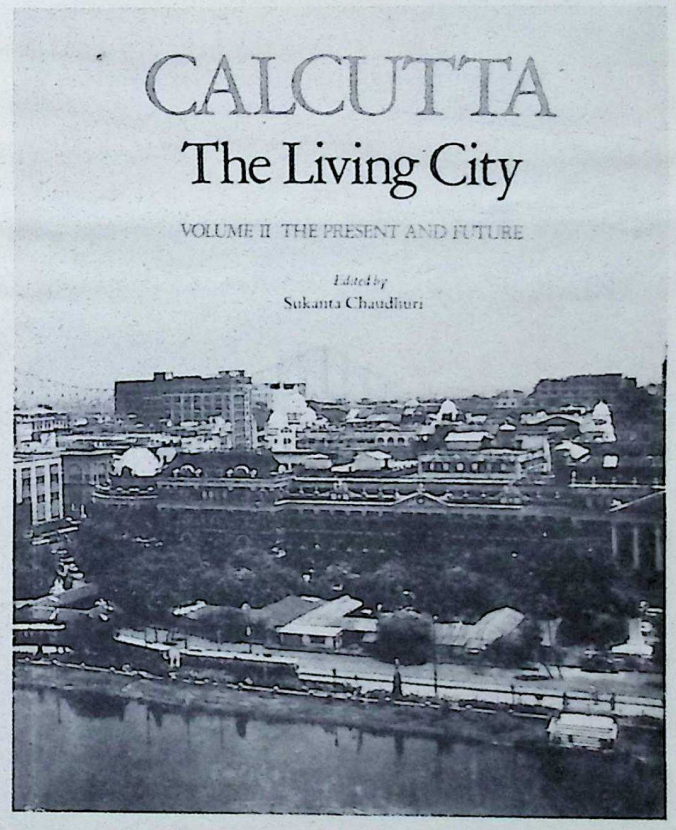
Calcutta with all its expansiveness, architectural beauty, brisk business, hospitality of the people and a distinct culture of its own, has become a much-maligned city. It has been described as a dying or doomed city. Invectives and expletives have been heaped on it from Bishop Reginald Heber to Gunter Grass. Even its own poets have described it as a "black snake" (Dinesh Das) and a "dying courtesan" (Phanibusan Acharya). Yet, its hundreds of sons and daughters, be they academics and artists, filmmakers and playwrights, scientists and economists, have been fiercely loyal to this 300-year-old dynamic city. Out of the symbiotic relationship between the erstwhile British rulers and the proud, intellectually-prone "natives" emerged the "Calcutta Culture" and in its turn, it started off the renaissance of the whole country and triggered the political emancipation of the Indian sub-continent.

The book under review is in two large-sized volumes (metric demi quarto-size) running to 600 pages and containing over 50 major articles and 36 shorter pieces and several "boxes", as well as over 1000 illustrations. But the two volumes are not intended for the coffee-table. They are intended for the serious-minded student or scholar ensconced in an armchair or a comfortable sofa.

The two volumes constitute a veritable encyclopaedia of Calcutta, though the items are not arranged alphabetically. The indexes are there, of course, for ready reference. The articles written by 39 authorities, mostly Calcuttans—and Bengalis at that except for four, P. Thankappan Nair, Sunil Kothari, Cyrus J. Madan and Sidney Kitson.

To the editor, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Professor of English, Presidency College, Calcutta, grateful thanks must go from the readers for having carefully planned the book with utmost devotion to Calcutta, and for selecting the proper persons, drawn from the universities based in the city and elsewhere, specialists, and men and women of distinction, who through their writings have contributed to the legend and lore of Calcutta.

In association with Jayanta Ghosh, an art director of the Ananda Bazar Group of Publications, the editor has also planned the lay-out of the book that is easy to read with two columns in each page. Impeccable taste can be found in the selection of covers, title pages, end-papers, an ornamental design at the beginning of each article and end-illustrations wherever necessary. In the case of photographs of hundreds of individuals who had contributed to the making of Calcutta, the size is uniform—that of a double-stamp. Illustrations that embellish the volume are drawn from private and public collections, from museums and film archives and from many libraries.



An interesting aspect of Sukanta Chaudhuri's editorial style is the introduction of a new system for uniform transliteration of Bengali names. Thus, we have Hugli, not Hooghly, Bardhaman for Burdwan, Chauranghi for Chowringhee, Subhas Chandra Basu, nor Bose, Umesh Chandra Banerji for Woomesh Chunder Bonnerji, Thakur for Tagore, Sunil Ganguli for Sunil Gangopadhyay. It takes a little time to get adjusted to the new regimen but it is to be welcomed.

The very first item and page of the text in volume I is about the origin of the name of Calcutta, with an illustration of Kali adorning it—and blessing the venture as it were. In the second volume, there is a detailed article on the Durga Puja, the hardy annual of Calcutta. Due homage is paid to Job Charnock and Siraj-ud-duala for their contribution to the founding of Calcutta. P. Thankappan Nair, that outstanding scholar from Kerala, who has devoted his whole life to chronicling the history of his second home-town, has traced the growth and development of the one-time capital of India in an exhaustive manner. Nair has also written on the civic and public services in "Old Calcutta." Pradip Sinha's "Calcutta and the Currents of History 1690-1912" gives a quick and panoramic view of Calcutta's history through three centuries.

The Jews and Armenians have not been forgotten for their participation in the city's growth, as also the Thakurs of Jorasanko. "The British life in Old Cal" by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "The Lost World of the Babus" by Subir Ray Chaudhuri and "The World of Ramjan Ostagir: The Common Man in Calcutta" by Sumanta Banerji provide enjoyable excursions into the past of the city. Drawings by the British, "Battala" woodcuts, Kalighat paintings, etc., supplement the words of the text. Historian Sumit Sarkar of the Delhi University has written about the Bengal Renaissance, which is followed by a series of articles on the literature and literary life of the past, an insight into Old Calcutta as presented in Bengali literature, the development of printing and

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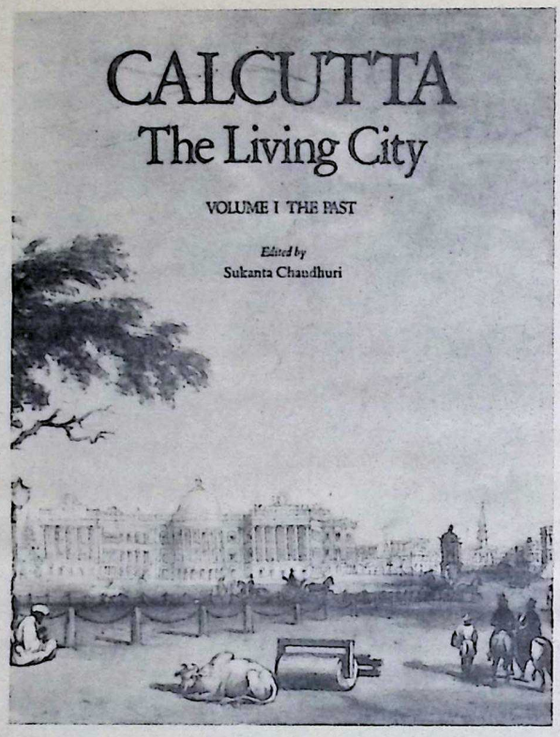
publishing houses, art and photography, architecture, theatre and music. "Wealth and Work in Calcutta" by Amiya Kumar Baghchi, that outstanding economic historian, "Scientific Studies in Calcutta," and "Calcutta's Industrial Archaeology" are stimulating articles. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya of Jawaharlal Nehru University has contributed an interesting article on the traders and trades. Sidney Kitson has traced the history of the Police from the "Crown" to the "Ashoke Pillar".



The "boxed" items in the volume especially on Rammohan Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Mission, Victoria Memorial and so on with illustrations provide transitions and links between the articles.

The second volume is the bigger of the two by almost a hundred pages, with a wider diversity of articles and a plenitude of illustrations. As in the first volume, ethnic minorities and groups are not forgotten. Thus, we have articles on the Parsis, the Chinese, the Anglo-Indians and the Marwaris. (One could wish there had been an article on the Muslims and their contribution.)

The growth of Calcutta in the twentieth century, the politics and "political culture" of Calcutta, the demographic changes, the waves of refugees, these and other subjects are dealt with by experts. Omkar Goswamy's "Calcutta's Economy 1918-1970" and that formidable scholar, Bhabatosh Datta's "Economy of Calcutta: Today and Tomorrow" are very valuable, providing fresh insights and perspectives.

The city's Barabazar, markets, the port, College Street, traffic and transport including the metro, the airport have not been ignored. Nor its environment, the wetlands, the river and the wildlife.

The editor, Sukanta Chaudhuri, has contributed an article on education in modern Calcutta and another one on the Presidency College in this volume and an interesting piece on the coming of railways to Calcutta. He is at ease with his subjects as much as with the "Renaissance Pastoral" and "Shakespeare and the Renaissance Image of Man" on which two subjects he has written excellent books, published by Clarendon Press.

A major portion of the second volume is devoted to literature and literary life, art and artists, music, dance, theatre and cinema—a veritable cornucopia.

Between Tapobrata Ghosh, who has written about the "Age of Rabindranath" and the poet, Sankho Ghosh, who has dealt with "Literary World of Modern Calcutta 1941-1980" the history and development of Bengali literature in the twentieth century is covered. Subho Ranjan Dasgupta's and Sudesna Chakrabarti's articles on "Calcutta in 20th Century Literature" (in terms of poetry and fiction respectively) are well researched and extremely readable. "English Writing in Calcutta" by Ananda Lal, poet and translator, is yet another worthwhile piece. And, the delightful piece on the Calcutta *Adda* rounds off this section.

The Calcutta Group and other artists have been given their slot. (A pity that Pranabranjan Ray is nowhere mentioned). Exponents of classical music, Bengali songs, Western music, and of classical dance (Sunil Kothari) are all given their due. (Sad, not even a box for the singers.) Kumar Roy of Bohurupee has chronicled "Five Decades of Calcutta Theatre." The filmologist, Samik Banerjee, has handled the early years of Calcutta cinema, while Moinik Biswas, a lecturer of English has perceptively written about modern Bengali cinema. There is a box item on Satyajit Ray.

Among the other contributions to this sumptuous volume are articles devoted to the libraries of Calcutta, the Calcutta Book Fair, the food and sweets (*mishti*) of Calcutta with a box on *sandesh*, and on Calcutta sports and favourite soccer.

If I have left out other contributions and names of the contributors, it was not intentional and I may be forgiven. Constraint of space was the main factor.

Before concluding, I must make one important observation. The editor, Sukanta Chaudhuri, must be complimented for his selection of contributors and for briefing them not to go in for rhetoric, superlatives and the so-called "Bengali superiority-complex." There is a wonderful commonalty of approach and treatment—almost leading to uniformity—that is rare in such anthologies of writings by diverse hands. Surely, the editor could not have "cut and edited" the articles. But he has got excellent cooperation from his colleagues.

An interesting aspect of Sukanta Chaudhuri's editorial style is the introduction of a new system for uniform transliteration of Bengali names. Thus, we have Hugli not Hooghly, Bardhaman for Burdwan, Chauranghi for Chowringhee, Subhas Chandra Basu not Bose, Umesh Chandra Banerji for Woomesh Chunder Bonnerji, Thakur for Tagore, Sunil Ganguli for Sunil Gangopadhyay. It takes a little time to get adjusted to the new regimen but it is to be welcomed.

A few omissions and commissions need to be mentioned. First of all, the contents page should have mentioned the authors' names along with the titles. Secondly, the authors' bio-data could have been included in the opening pages of articles. Thirdly, a detailed bibliography could have been included, even if that meant another five or six pages. There could have been boxes or short articles on the *jatras*, the red-light district, the contributions of South Indians and Gujaratis. Calcutta's role during the Second World War and in the liberation of Bangladesh from the Pakistani yoke surely deserved an article.

The city of Calcutta has been the source of inspiration for all those who have participated in this *Living City* venture without any committees, governmental subsidy, bureaucratic interference—all to the credit of the editor and his colleagues, who represent the true "Calcutta Culture".

For the reviewer, who considers Calcutta his second home and who has many friends in the city, these volumes will occupy the pride of place in his library and provide hours of pleasure in reading and re-reading them. As he nears his seventies, his pastime can be in refurbishing his memories of the city during the last half-a-century, though he has visited Calcutta only off and on. ❑

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Mystique of a Muse

Ranjan Roy

HE CALCUTTA PSYCHE

dited by Geeti Sen

dia International Centre and Rupa & Co., 1990–91, p. 316, Rs 250

Lucid prose has often been able to capture the smells, the noises, the ambience and sometimes the spirit of Calcutta. Much has been written about Job Charnock's city. *he Calcutta Psyche* proves that there is always ope for more writing on Calcutta. Adroitly put gether as a collection of essays on Calcutta and e Bengali Calcuttan mind, the book covers most pects that make the city—fish, football, K.C. as, Satyajit Ray, Tagore and Marxism—to name few.

Calcutta is definitely the Muse—and she is alive, beit in a strange way. Geeti Sen need not have unded so melancholy in her editorial introduc- g the collection of poems, articles and photo- says that comprise the 330–page monograph blished on the tricentennial of the city by India ternational Centre and Rupa.

The book, thankfully, departs from discussing squalor, the filth, the claustrophobic crowds, pollution and the uneven roads. But mention- these—which have become synonymous with city—the essays bring out the aesthete, the ductress and the Muse that the city is. It is a hard- und celebration of the Bengali intellectual of lcutta. The book confirms what is often said out Calcutta: you cannot be indifferent towards —you have to either love her or hate her. And ou hate her, the *Calcutta Psyche* will tease you, to change your mind and if not successful will east fill you with remorse for not liking such a .

Through the lives and work of important Ben- protagonists in the fields of science, theatre, rature, administration and religion, the book ds the reader through the rise and fall of the ngali intellectual and the apparently inexpli- le reasons for the state that we find Calcutta in today.

Growing up in Calcutta is not the same any re. But for someone who has spent a few years of childhood in the dingier parts of North Calcutta, R.P. Gupta's article "Sounds and Street Cries of Calcutta" is sheer nostalgia. To a child who has barely mastered the voluntary use of vocal chords, the cries of vendors are novel. They are to be emulated with the greatest of skill and precision. Through the cries of the *pheriwallah*, the author attempts to acquaint the younger generation of readers with the social processes that led to the birth and demise of types of *pheriwallahs* and the economic conditions in the city at that time. The cry *kooer-ghotee-tollah* (Will take out utensils from the well) belonged to a phase in Calcutta when piped water was just being introduced. More poignant of the street cries of Calcutta has been *Maa, Bhater Fan Dao* (Oh mother, give me some rice water), acry heard several time during the day at the height of food shortages, natural calamities and the refugee influx into the city around the period of the Bangladesh war. No one who has heard this cry can erase it from memory.

The essay on Bengali cuisine is mouthwatering. Krishna Sikund, her work currently on the tribals in India and the Tagore inheritance, skilfully describes the *shukta* and how its recipe was inevitable in the first conversation between a prospective Calcutta mother-in-law and a bride-to-be. Though it would perhaps require an entire book to describe how inextricably food is related to all aspects of Bengali life, the essay remains a recommended hors d'oeuvre.

Class antagonisms and cultural friction manifested through popular jokes, folk rhymes and graffiti of Calcutta in the nineteenth century is the subject of Sumanta Banerjee's essay "Laughter as Subversion". Banerjee, steeped in Calcutta, as it were, knows what he is talking about in discussing common repartees, and the comic mechanism in popular speech. However, to appreciate and enjoy much of this an elementary knowledge of Bengali might be essential.

Three essays grouped under "Ideological Temper" insightfully outline the coming of age of the Calcutta intellectual and the various historical and social processes that have impacted the creation of a vibrant intellectual atmosphere. Bhabani Sengupta, in charting the path of Bengali radicalism, explains how left intellectualism has waned in Calcutta during the 21–odd years when the left front has been a major force in Bengal. Pertinently pointed out here is also the fact that the domination of a single, avowedly anti-left newspaper group over the literary life of Calcutta was killing innovativeness.

> Ideology is being devalued all the world over. Radicalism is getting nonpolitical in the traditional sense of politics. Bengali radicalism cannot feed on the pale residual orthodoxies of Vietnam and Cuba. It needs a more vitalising diet which is not available for import, nor producible at home at least for some time. The Bengali will still claim to be a rebel and a radical. Perhaps he will remain what a Bangladeshi poet calls *komal-bidrohi*, a soft and mellow rebel.
>
> *The 'Radical' Mind of Calcutta*, Bhabani Sengupta

What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow. A popular adage, used with a measure of chauvinistic pride. Probably far from the truth today. But that the pride in progress, reason and a scientific temper is not wholly unjustified is amply elucidated in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's "Defending the Scientific Temper". Rarely in the history of any region does one find such a rich scientific debate as in the Bengal of Meghnad Saha, Prafulla Chandra Ray, S.N. Bose and Dr B.C. Ray. These fine minds represented the best tribute to the intellectual tradition of inquiry and reason of Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1883) and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–91).

The archetypal *bhadralok* and a Calcuttan to the hilt, Asok Mitra provides a fine analysis of Bengali enterprise (or lack of it). "Revisiting Calcutta—Dusk or Dawn" contains an erudite contrast between inheritance patterns in Bengal (Dayabhag) and the system in operation in northern India (Mitakshara) rendered in his inimitible style. This, Mitra says, left Bengal with much smaller landholdings and stifled capital accumulation. This, combined with the "evil consequences" of the Permanent Settlement of 1793, which allowed a Bengali inheriting a large estate to be a spendthrift and a drone, are cited here as some of the reasons for the traditional Bengali "laziness" or the lack of entrepreneurship. The atmosphere created was one where "working with one's hands was synonymous with low birth and station".

Historian Sumit Sarkar, writing in the section on "Religious Temper" depicts Ramakrishna as a man and his interactions with the Calcutta society of his time. In this context Sarkar describes Ramakrishna's catholicity in relating to various sections of Calcuttans—the *bhadralok*, the zamindar, the Marwari and even "an unexpected association with professional actresses".

The second article in this section is a very straightforward biography of Aurobindo by Karan Singh. This is followed by what seems, coming immediately after, an enigmatic piece on the "divine feminine". Manashi Dutta, drawing on images of Kali, attempts a critique of the portrayal

njan Roy works for PTI Television.

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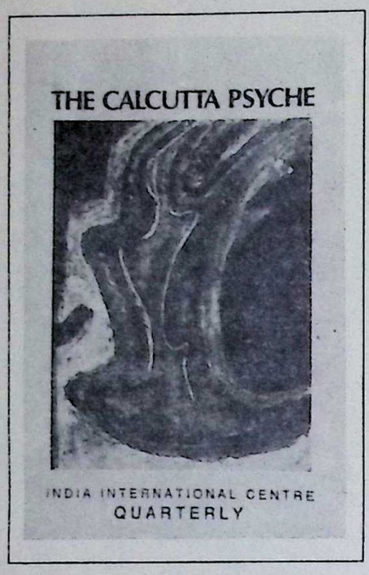

NOTHING would make the Calcuttan feel more grateful than if he were given by the state three very elementary things: electricity, a cleaner and more orderly road and rail transport system; and improved road surfaces and traffic regulation. In being patient, almost resigned, the Calcuttan has reached the point of being mistaken for a moron.

Revisiting Calcutta: Dusk or Dawn, Asok Mitra

IN TRADITIONAL Bengali households a woman is trained to accept the ideal as the real. As a girl, she is auspicious and delights all by her presence but she must have a sense of shame about her very being. She is the accessible form of the goddess yet she is also a contradiction: accessible but fleeting, enduring but easily hurt. She is the queen of the household she enters after marriage, but subservient to all and her turn always comes last....These and other contradictory messages are communicated and reinforced by gestures, looks and other signs transmitted by parents and other significant members. It is through these that the Bengali girl learns about a woman's place in the world.

The Living Goddess, Manashi Dasgupta

of the Bengali woman. Like anywhere else in India, Bengal has been and remains a man's world. Despite the Ram Mohan Roys and the renaissance and the progressive politicisation of Bengali society, the Bengali woman, the saree pallu draped over her head, remains confused by the liberal rhetoric and trapped by the conservatism at home. Analysed ad nauseum in myriad films, novels, romanticised in poems, she remains not a very shining example of enlightened Bengal. Manashi Dutta, using the paradigm of the "divine feminine" plods the marsh surrounding the concept of Bengali femininity. Her comments on Satyajit Ray and Prabhat Kumar (in a critique of the film *Devi*), about viewing things through a "rationalist" male perspective and hence missing the contradictions, are valid.

The discussion of Bengali morality continues in the essay on early Bengali actresses by Rimli Bhattacharya, engaged in researching the life and work of nineteenth century actresses of Bengal.

If you are wondering what happened to Tagore, wait. Can you have a book on Calcutta's mind without mention of Tagore, the man who, some claim, epitomises Bengal? But it is not the bard's written word or his music that is discussed here. Paritosh Sen, one of the best known contemporary painters of India, talks of Tagore the painter. The story of how, in his seventies, Tagore found himself giving in to the desire to grant visual form to some of his poetic ideas and his experiments with the medium makes fascinating reading.

A not so well known short-story writer is discovered in Ritwik Ghatak. As Partha Basu points out, the film-maker and the quintessential maverick had penned forty short-stories, two novels, six plays, twenty-five screen plays and over seven dozen critiques on films from 1950 onwards. Interestingly, most of his stories were written before he launched his first film venture in 1952. True to type, Ghatak was bothered about posterity, but in a strange way. Of his writings only 15–odd have been found.

The quintessential Bengali *bhadralok*—the man who, fans claim, put India and Bengal on the world cinema map—has always found Calcutta an ideal backdrop, locale or reference for his films. The article by Amitabha Bhattacharya depicts Ray's involvement with the city through his films.

The book is made colourful by some excellent period photographs clubbed under a photo-essay on the *bhadralok* and another of portraits by Sunil Janah.

Well brought out in a hard bound edition, the book remains somewhat inaccessible at Rs. 250.00. One looks forward to a paperback edition which could reach more readers in Calcutta and temporarily revive their faith in the city. ❑

Birthday

SAMAR SEN

Take me back to that easy city,
Where after their working hours
The tired people return home at least without fear;
Where in the vermilion light of the western sunset
The housewives bathe,
And where under the incognito of darkness,
The footless 'babus'
Swiftly sneak into alleys of ill-fame.

The days of the past never return.
I look up at the sky
Where lost in itself,
The ball of fire burns;
In the drifting dust the bald banyan tree stands tired,
Its leaves shed.
Yet, trees regain their youth every year,
While we drown slowly in the well dug by ourselves.

Death after an easy life—
is like the moonlight on the banyan tree,
Or the mist over empty mountain peaks,
Not for us that classical peace;
On our journey from insomnia to nightmares
Crows squawk,
Sounds from sunburnt anxious faces follow us,
In Bengal, Bihar,Garhmukteswar
People carry mangled bodies
To graveyards,
Or cremation grounds.

Death perhaps brings in its wake, friendship:
Every being is levelled at the end of an earthly life—
The Hindu from Bihar and the Muslim from Noakhali,
The Hindu from Noakhali and the Muslim from Bihar.

II

I no longer hear the music of the seas,
My blood has stopped throbbing
At the dissonant notes of trams and buses,
I've forgotten the red earth of the Santhal Parganas,
The rising mountain I saw once in the horizon,
The strains of 'Vasant Bahar' once heard
In the gathering at a Baiji's.
I've forgotten my addiction to the heady get-togethers
On the porches in Baghbazar,
The style of walking in Ballygunge slippers,
And the ravings in Dalhousie Square and Clive Street,
The foreign sirens from ships in the docks.
The romantic sickness of nostalgia
No longer changes itself into poetry.

The love of youth closes with the lust of old age.
Ten years hence, Benares will be my home for dotage!

From The Calcutta Psyche

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Of A Many-Splendoured Life

B.G. Verghese

ALL THESE YEARS: A MEMOIR

by Raj Thapar

Seminar Publications, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 472, Rs. 275.00

Forty-two years of our political involvement... those remembered things" is how Romesh Thapar describes his wife Raj's memoir after her death by cancer followed barely four months after by his own. There never was a closer couple. Raj had a mind and personality of her own. But she was obviously greatly shaped and influenced by him, as he was, less obviously, by her. The diary she maintained over many years recorded the distilled experience of both their lives. In many ways the *Memoir* is Raj's telling of Romesh's story as she shared it.

They kept an open house whose human hospitality and intellectual fare attracted an extraordinary assortment of people, political, academic, media-related and cultural—for this was their world. Romesh was always exploding with ideas and was with Raj, in turn, a sounding board and transmitter. Many paths converged on the Thapar home and office. Their life was a seminar and it is no wonder that that is what Raj named the journal they ran together for 28 years.

I have a letter of Romesh's which fell out of a file of some of my old clippings. It opens with a typically Thaparian phrase: "Must create the mood for a breakthrough." That was it: a constant search for a breakthrough to realise a vision. If Romesh's intellectual chain reactions achieved instant criticality, Raj's more earthy, womanly mind provided the coolant to ensure a more controlled reaction. The *Memoir* covers three broad phases. First, more than a flirtation with Communism inspired by the prospect of a proletarian revolution in India. The disillusionment and a search for new moorings. Next the bright hope of a brave new world in India that Indira Gandhi would build. Another disillusionment leading to guilt, repudiation and anger. Death intervened before this part could be fully recorded in the *Memoir*. But the hint of fear and foreboding is unmistakable.

The book is fun, vivid, anecdotal, with many very amusing vignettes of people and situations that quite a few might personally recall. It is frank, sometimes cuttingly so, though without malice and seldom forgetful of the deeper bonds of friendship. This is not, however, a political biography or political history. It is a selective, worm's-eye view, episodic, highly personal. It is an unconnected narrative in so far as events or incidents are not necessarily placed in context or backgrounded. Raj does not chronicle the attitudes or perceptions of all the actors though they might be named. Those who did not live through those events may therefore sometimes lose the thread. For instance, Raj writes that Romesh's political involvement with Mrs Gandhi started in 1963 when, in a column he did for the *Economic Weekly* (now *Economic and Political Weekly*), "he exposed (Lal Bahadur) Shastri's role in U.P." in intriguing against the dying Nehru. This not through information but through "sixth sense". An overwrought Mrs Gandhi sent for Romesh, broke down and wept. But we do not know what it is Shastri was supposed to have said or done.

There is also a difference in style. The Marxist phase of their lives is written with a certain lightheartedness, maybe because that was over and no longer mattered. The Indira years bear a more brooding, care-worn stamp.

The story opens in Bombay soon after Raj married Romesh in 1945. It was of all people Frank Moraes, a senior collegue at the *Times of India*, who inducted young Romesh into the Communist circuit by taking him along to his weekly dinners at the Communist Party headquarters at Sandhurst Road. Marxism was very much in fashion and many among the élite thought nothing of joining the Bombay commune, Mohan Kumaramangalam among them. P.C. Joshi, as general secretary of the CPI, knit everybody together. *People's Age*, the party organ, saw revolution around the corner and when the RIN mutiny erupted a lot of people thought the day had come. Nothing happened and Raj flung away a photograph of Nehru on her mantlepiece—he was already suspect as a "running dog of Imperialism"—and replaced it with one of Rajni Palme Dutt, the ideological commissioner from London who was held in great awe by all.

The Party never asked or wanted the Thapars to join their cadres. They were felt to be more useful as a means of liaison with the bourgeoisie. The Thapar home could be a meeting place and it was here that the Party desired Rajni Palme Dutt should stay when he visited India. And thus began another friendship. Romesh meanwhile continued as a broadcaster, newsreel commentator, actor and producer for IPTA (the Communist theatre movement) and as a film script-writer.

Quitting the *Times of India*, Romesh, accompanied by Raj, moved to London and post-war Europe as the *Free Press Journal* representative, getting a flavour of the new Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Back eighteen months later, the Thapars found the CPI changed, with P.C. Joshi being pilloried for daring to believe that India had become independent. The challenger, B.T. Ranadive, would have none of this nonsense and had planned a general strike on February 22, 1949, that would bring down the Government and liberate India. Everyone was given an appointed task. Romesh, code-named Krishan Bihari, was to rush out of his flat at 6 a.m., get to the Hanging Gardens and, if the textile factory chimneys were not belching smoke as usual, "was to leap into his car and tear down Marine Drive to All-India Radio and help seize the radio station. He would be met by others there". Romesh, never his glorious best at 6 a.m., rushed up to the Hanging Gardens, saw the sky across the harbour filled with chimney smoke and promptly rushed back to bed to make up for lost sleep. The whole thing was a fiasco, a revolution in fantasy.

Romesh's assignment as Tanjug correspondent in India and the Marxist weekly *Crossroads* that he had started, kept the Thapars going. More "ideological" hilarity was to follow. Ajoy Ghosh had walked on stage obsessed with the latest Cominform journal editorial on India which, after lambasting India's class character, called on the Party to align "with all the peasantry". The CPI was in a tizzy. Could that mean a direction to join hands with the kulaks? Endless debate followed. Ajoy Ghosh was to prepare the party document setting out the Line. How was "all the peasantry" to be interpreted? Finally Raj was sent to London to find out from Palme Dutt. Raj found an excuse to visit London and called up Dutt who, incredulous on being asked the question, jovially confirmed that "naturally all the peasantry means all the peasantry! What else could it mean, my dear?" Raj's jaw fell at the absurdity of the whole situation. That afternoon when she told Dutt that Romesh and she planned to put in their papers again for party membership, he said, "No, no. You mustn't do that. The Party is no place for Romesh and you." It was the reputed Communist ideologue who saved the Thapars from the Party. He knew.

More intrigue was to follow before the final breach. Involved as he was in the Peace Movement, another Communist front, Romesh was accused by the Central Committee of attempting

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THEN came the news of Gandhiji's assassination. We were glued to the radio all day . . . The whole of Bombay mourned that evening and the next as groups of people clustered together at street corners, on footpaths, weeping unashamedly. I found myself doing the same.

I never realised then what it meant—that my emotions were way out of line with my mental processes, theorising, beliefs, and that something was seriously non-aligned there. It didn't seem to wash, all that business of calling Gandhiji a reactionary, a fuddy-duddy who was taking us on the backward path, because obviously his death stirred a chord so deeply embedded in my psyche that it engulfed every fragment of my being.

And his assassination fulfilled his last journey in a way. I was later to discover that when Nehru and other members of the government were sitting around his body, weeping for him, Sarojini Naidu had come upon them and almost shouted, 'Stop snivelling. What did you want him to die of, smallpox?' That certainly must have shocked them out of their helplessness. The walking in Noakhali, the preaching of peace between the Hindus and Muslims, the oneness of God and the assassin's bullet were all of a piece, the bullet shattering, congealing, shaming a million communal thoughts into silence.

From Raj Thapar's *All These Years*

to derail the Party and Palme Dutt of "meddling" in the internal affairs of the Indian Party. That was the end.

Meanwhile, *Crossroads*, run as an independent Marxist journal, had been banned. An appeal to the Supreme Court went in its favour and the Romesh Thapar case became a landmark judgement in establishing freedom of the press. Soon after, *Crossroads* began to acquire the flavour of the Party organ as all CPI publications were banned. Finally, Romesh made a generous gift of the paper to the Party. The Communist chapter was coming to a close.

Romesh turned to the cinema. He acted in *Footpath* with Dilip Kumar, worked on *Mughal-e-Azam*, wrote *India in Transition* just before Khrushchev's shattering revelations at the Soviet 20th Congress. The truth was out.

The idea of *Seminar* dawned: "opposing viewpoints within the covers of a single magazine", and without an editorial opinion. The magazine was to remain a lifetime companion, a sounding board. Auden once said, "Our intellectual marines land on little magazines to capture a trend." *Seminar* set out to be such a magazine. Debate was joined. As an outlet for his own opinions and information that came his way, Romesh started writing Capital Diary, a weekly column in the *Economic and Political Weekly* from Delhi to where they had moved.

It was the *EPW* column that brought Romesh to Mrs Gandhi's notice though she first met him as chairperson of the New York Fair Committee. The death of Nehru came as a blow. An inexperienced Indira Gandhi became Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Romesh became her personal adviser. His membership of the Nehru Memorial Trust was an added factor in establishing proximity to her. As Raj puts its, a guilt factor about spurning Nehru during their Marxist years drew Romesh closer to his daughter as a symbol of Nehruism that must be protected. Mrs Gandhi in turn seemed to have developed a persecution mania about Shastri trying to be rid of her and, thereby, "Nehruism".

With Shastri's death, Indira threw her hat into the ring and became Prime Minister as a compromise candidate. Hope was in the air with visions of a brave new world that was going to be ushered in by this new-generation leader. Romesh kept suggesting ideas, looking through speeches and so on but gave up doing his *EPW* column as he discovered an anonymous counter-column to his own had been introduced. He took over the ITDC and Raj joined Bal Bhavan. Followed the 1967 elections, cabinet making, new appointments, the Congress split, the 1971 electoral victory.

It was soon after that the Thapars got a first insight into Mrs Gandhi's "imperious mind", though Raj earlier writes of her "chameleon-like" quality, speaking in different voices to different people, and of her having angrily ticked off a hapless domestic for serving Padmaja Naidu before herself at dinner, which she held to be a gross violation of protocol. This incident followed the savage treatment meted out to Srichand Chhabra, then NDMC President, for clearing some squatters who had been encouraged by Sanjay Gandhi. Sanjay was furious and got his mother to dismiss Chhabra. Romesh like many others was outraged and on remonstrating with her was accused by Indira of "spreading slander".

The 1971 war was a triumph for Mrs Gandhi, but word of mounting corruption within her entourage began to grow. Romesh felt he should tell the PM and did so only to have her fuming. The breach was widening. Sanjay was reaching out for power. Taneja, Chairman of the Central Bank of which Romesh was then a Director, was reportedly dropped for not obliging Sanjay with a huge loan. The rot had gone deep. Underlying everything was the gnawing question whether Mrs Gandhi was only out for personal aggrandisement. Just then came the Allahabad High Court judgement disqualifying her for six years. Romesh thought the PM should step down, appeal to the Supreme Court and then go to the polls. Sanjay had other plans and would not let him meet his mother. The storm-troopers would soon be in action. The Emergency was clamped down. Few stood up.

Seminar was not touched by censorship at first but it was served with a pre-censorship order soon after it came out with an issue detailing various Court judgements upholding democratic rights. Rather than submit, *Seminar* closed. Elections. JP. The Janata interlude. And Indira Gandhi's return.

The book speaks through encounters with and impressions of people. Many well-known personalities and close friends are found wanting, their weaknesses and foibles recalled. Many of the comments and assessments are scathing, a few wounding. Yet, where close friendships had been struck, Raj clings to her belief in the brighter aspects of those tarnished images.

As a highly personalised and, often, second memoir, *All These Years* offers interesting insights from a close observer of some of the power play that went on in Delhi. It is not and does not pretend to be political history. Some of the sequence is mistaken and, in some cases, the narrative is not part of the mainstream. Devaluation for example had been decided upon long before Raj says they were informed about it and was enacted in a manner that left a deep impress on Mrs Gandhi. About Tashkent. I happened to be with her at the moment the news came through. Her comment: "The Army won't like it." That was a reference to Shastri's agreeing to withdraw from Haji Pir. The storm at the meeting with Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy's personal envoy (?), was over India's occupation of Goa which Schlesinger said was outrageous and contrary to the assurances Nehru had given Kennedy. That was the starting point for the exchanges that followed. Nor was Sanjay Gandhi the originator of the slogan *Garibi Hatao*. It was C. Subramaniam who had said that while in 1942 the country resolved on "Quit India", the cry must now be "Quit Poverty". The phrase translated into *Garibi Hatao* and soon gained currency.

None of this, however, detracts from the merit of the book. The broad, impressionistic picture that emerges of the fortunes of the Communist party and then of India under Indira Gandhi, and of the men and women who strode or strutted across that part of the stage that came within the Thapars' ken, and of which they were a part, is illuminating, human, amusing, warm. All of it as reflected in Raj's intuitive mind and Romesh's zestful vision of what might be. ❑

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A Sane View of Mandir Issue

nder Malhotra

NATOMY OF A CONFRONTATION: THE BABRI ASJID–RAMJANMABHUMI ISSUE

dited by Sarvepalli Gopal

iking Penguin (India), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 240, s. 195.00

More by coincidence than design, this valuable and welcome book has come out at a very appropriate time—on the eve of an extraordinary general election hich could prove to be a major turning point in e history of this troubled land. Not only is the ectre of another "hung Parliament" haunting e nation, but major contenders for power are aking their bids on the strength of emotions—ste-based job reservations in the name of Man-l and the demand for building a Ram temple by molishing, or at least "towing away" the Babri asjid at Ayodhya—which cannot but add to the eady intolerable strains on national unity.

The latter of the two issues, which are not en-ely unconnected to each other, is the focus of the llection of essays under review. Written by emi-nt scholars and historians, half of whom belong the Jawaharlal Nehru University, the volume mes as a breath of fresh air in today's atmos-ere poisoned by competitive religious funda-ntalism. It is, for that reason, unlikely to be pular with the BJP which has made the replace-nt of the mosque by a mandir the sheet-anchor its impatient drive to capture the citadel of wer in New Delhi. But leaders of the party and the VHP, its aggressively militant front, can ax.

For superb though the book is, it is not going to fluence the hordes of fanatics the Hindu funda-ntalisits have so manifestly mobilised. They are t even going to touch it, leave alone read it. owever, the book should be compulsory reading all those who have neither bid farewell to tionality nor are prepared to countenance a litical order in India that would inevitably de-oy whatever little chance there is of preserving ane, civilised, modern society in which there is uality before the law and no second class citizen. S. Gopal has not only edited the book but also ntributed to it a succinct and thought-provok-ing introduction, encapsulating all the frightening implications of the confrontation that underlies the hysteria over the temple question and pointing out that rather than drag the country back to religious warfare of the medieval ages, the people ought to be "led out of social backwardness into forward-looking egalitarianism".

To his credit, Dr Gopal does face, though very briefly, a stark reality many other defenders of secular values tend to overlook. If, as he says, "what even a few years ago would have been laughed out as a sick joke on the eccentric fringe of Indian public life" has become a pressing demand of a very large number of people, there must be some reason for it. To expect that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism within the country and on its sensitive frontiers, of Sikh fundamentalism that becomes a cover for not only secession and terror but also for smuggling of arms and narcotics, and of religion in general across the globe would have no effect on Hindus would have been unrealistic. Gopal recognizes this. He also notes that it has become easy for those out to exploit Hindu reaction to the fundamentalist tide in other religions because the pratice of secularism in India has left a lot to be desired.

But then two wrongs would never make one right. The way to fight minority communalism is not to promote a reactive communalism within the majority but resolutely to fight both. Otherwise, to equate majority communalism with nationalism, as is being done day after day, would be a sure road to fascism.

It is within this broad context that different scholars have examined minutely the arguments, supposed to be historical, that are being put forward in support of the demand to do away with the mosque. The conclusions they have come to compel attention. These are that the historical basis for the BJP-VHP campaign is highly questionable, to say the least; that mythology has been systematically purveyed as history and at the same time proclaimed to be the truth beyond any scrutiny, judicial or academic; and that there is nothing to show that a temple, leave alone one devoted to Lord Rama, ever existed on the spot where the disputed and disused mosque stands. Another conclusion, which would not please Ram *bhaktas*, is that there were more disputes in the nineteenth century centring on the controversial Ayodhya site "among different Hindu sects than between Hindus and Muslims".

It may be invidious to pick out only some of the contributions of a uniformly high order but a special mention must be made of three. Romila Thapar, in a historical perspective on the story of Rama, has drawn attention to the startling variations of the Rama *Katha* put forward by different sectarian and denominational orders within the Hindu society itself. This underscores the plurality of the Hindu society which, along with its catholicity and noble tradition of tolerance, is its strong point.

Must these virtues of Hinduism be destroyed and neo-Hinduism turned into some kind of a monolithic religion? The question is pertinent in view of Professor Neeladari Bhattacharya's essay, "Myth, History and Politics of Ramjanmabhumi" and Mr A.G. Noorani's characteristically thorough contribution on the legal aspects of the issue. For, these two pieces of analysis expose not only the political motives of those inflaming the issue but also the manner in which mobilisation for the replacement of the mosque by a mandir increased by leaps and bounds only after "collusion" developed between the ruling parties of the time and the forces of Hindu communalism.

This brings one to the dismal December night in 1949 when some "rather primitive" images of deities were found in the mosque at Ayodhya, "obviously put together hurriedly and proclaimed to be Rama manifesting himself", to use Gopal's description. He adds that Nehru immediately realised the wider and dangerous implications of what had happened and wrote to the then chief minister of UP, Govind Ballabh Pant, asking him personally to interest himself in the matter. But nothing happened. A later request to Lal Bahadur Shastri, then home minister of UP, was also unavailing.

Nehru was not the only one to write to Pant. Since his name is anathema to the enemies of secularism in any case, it would be useful to quote Mr Noorani and add that Sardar Patel also sent a letter to Pantji stressing that the issue of the idols had to be "resolved amicably in a spirit of mutual toleration and goodwill between the two communities".

"I realise there is a great deal of sentiment behind the move that has taken place," the Sardar had gone on. "At the same time, such matters can only be resolved peacefully if we take the willing consent of the Muslim community with us. There can be no question of resolving such disputes by force. In that case, the forces of law and order will have to maintain peace at all costs. If, therefore, peaceful and persuasive methods are to be followed, any unilateral action based on an attitude of aggression and coercion cannot be countenanced."

Mr L.K. Advani and other BJP leaders sometimes say that even if there be no evidence that a Rama temple existed at the disputed site or to establish that Ayodhya was in fact Rama's birthplace, the Muslim minority ought to "respect" the

der Malhotra is a journalist of repute and a former sident Editor of the Times of India.

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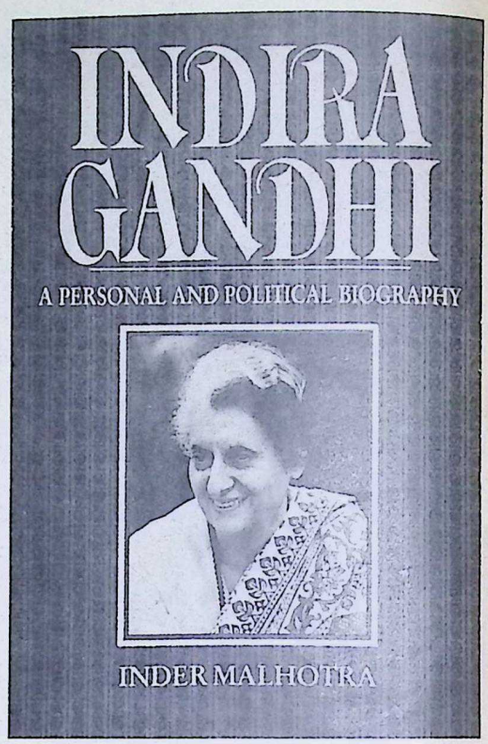
Detached Assessment

A.K. Damodaran

INDIRA GANDHI: A PERSONAL AND POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By Inder Malhotra

Hodder & Stoughton (hardcover), Arnold Publishers (paperback), 1991.



There have been several biographies of Indira Gandhi in recent years, most of them useful and informative and some of them genuine contributions to the understanding of the Indian political scene today. Many were, however, written during her years of power and there was generally a certain excess of excitement, sympathy or antipathy. The time has come for a new detached and cool look. Inder Malhotra's new book seems to fulfil that objective. Written in a pleasant, almost placid style, refusing to be seduced by the charms of partisanship, this summing up of a notable political career would serve as an effective and fair enough introduction to a new generation of young Indian readers who were born well after Mrs Gandhi emerged into a high profile international figure after several years as a gracious enough but not overly articulate presence by the side of her father.

The book is also directed towards the interested and intelligent foreign audience who would like to have a pleasant introduction to modern Indian history, with the necessary explanations and elaboration on specific Indian local themes added. What we get here is the blow by blow account of the incidents and obstacles in the evolution of a political matriarch against the background of precisely that part of history which gets lost between the text-books and contemporary journalism. The period between 1950 and 1985 is crucial to any understanding of the successes and the many tragic failures of our democratic experiment. In a smooth and unfussy manner this record of events and analysis of developments helps us to understand the even more complex problems which are faced by her successors in office.

The earlier story of Indira's life against the background of the national movement is well-known and the essential loneliness of the single child in a highly political family is brought out without too much exaggeration. We must be grateful to Malhotra for sparing us the inevitable excursions into the instant psycho-analysis. There are no conclusions unjustified by evidence about the Electra Complex or the Adlerian urge to power promoted by domestic alienation between mother and aunt. More relevant inputs like the correspondence with Jawaharlal during the prison years are briefly touched upon. Here, the *Glimpses of World History* is properly evaluated as a major achievement of the father. At the same time it is useful to recall that the letters were written in jail, kept back, and the manuscript read as a book by the daughter much later. She remembers them with great affection. She is proud of them but there was no immediate impact: only much later did she realise how important they had been in forming her world outlook at a moment of transition in Europe, China and India. The *Glimpses* had to be written by Nehru, one can argue, in prison, even if the audience was imaginary and not a nice young girl of 13, his own daughter. It was important for him to retrace the patterns in his incoherent understanding of the world's past. Rather like Gandhiji's imaginary interlocutors in *Hind Swaraj*. The colloquy as a literary form has been a useful method of the reorganisation of one's thoughts down the ages. The *Glimpses* achieved precisely that. It was a deeply felt need of the author. It is good for us that the audience was an equally important historical personality.

The deep hurt left behind by Kamla Nehru's illness and death and the consequent loneliness on the psyche of the daughter is lightly sketched. There is no attempt to overdo things. However, in another part of the book Malhotra refers to the astonishingly sensitive gesture of Jaiprakash

A.K. Damodaran, a retired foreign service officer, is a well-known commentator on international affairs.

faith and sentiment of the majority and give it the site for constructing a temple. If this request is meant to be sincere, the least its authors can do is to heed Sardar Patel's advice. To let loose brick-carrying cadres on the mosque with a declared objective to demolish it is surely not the most effective way to secure the minority's "willing cooperation".

However, the sad truth is that the BJP-VHP combine and its other supporters, by their egregious excesses, have made an amicable approach a rather distant dream, especially if the mandir card is to be played in the ongoing election.

That is where Gopal's pertinent observations come in. "Basically," he says, "it is irrelevant whether a temple had or had not existed on the site where the mosque now stands. India cannot revert to the approaches of medieval politics and set about destroying, under any circumstances, existing or erstwhile structures of worship. That such demolitions had taken place in the past offers no justification for such vandalism now. Today attention is centred on a mosque; tomorrow agitation may develop over a temple. It is established that some Buddhist and Jaina shrines were destroyed by Hindus. How far does one go, correcting the past as interpreted to one's own liking?"

Secularism, adds Gopal, is "more than laws, concessions and special considerations. It is a state of mind, almost an instinctive feeling, such as existed by and large, for many centuries in India. . . It is a good fortune and not the curse of India that she is a land of many religions with a complex and diverse culture. That culture can now, by effort, understanding and dedication, be expanded into a genuinely democratic culture of an educated people". Since some might object to the word Amen, let me say *Tathaastu*. ❑

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Narain when he handed over to Mrs Gandhi the pathetic letters written by Kamla to Prabhawati Devi. JP's wife, an inmate of the Ashram and another home-spun product of the Hindu familial culture in its post-Gandhian political manifestation was someone with whom Kamla could empathize in a manner she could not with her sister-in-law. All these important nuances are mentioned carefully in passing. There is no attempt to overdo things. Indira Gandhi's marriage is also discussed in some detail. Here, Malhotra has a special advantage because he was a personal friend of Feroze Gandhi and the civilized manner in which he avoids too obvious openings for developing the marital discord theme deserves appreciation. Towards the very end of the story there is one important political statement which Indira makes in a letter to Dorothy Norman. She says that Feroze resented her activities in domestic politics. This is understandable enough. To get away from the embarrassments of being the great man's son-in-law, Feroze had developed a passionate interest in investigative politics. That he was able to do so without coming into an open clash with Jawaharlal or Indira, says a great deal for the civilised norms of that generation. In this scenario Feroze was the political activist and Indira the private person engaged in domestic chores. Her emergence as a major figure in the Congress councils in her own right was not exactly welcome; it disturbed the earlier cosy psychological arrangement. All this is, however, unimportant when we notice the promptitude with which Indira rushed home after Feroze's heart attack (she was away on that famous Bhutan trek of Nehru in the Chumbi valley when it happened) and nursed him back to perfect health with exemplary solicitude. It is indicative of this author's delicacy in handling these matters that the "other men" in her life are mentioned, the rumours quoted with necessary scepticism but with no extravagant interest in personal details. At the end of it all they play their small parts in the scene and retreat into the shadows; it is made absolutely clear that their contribution to decision-making was marginal.

These years of preparation, apprenticeship or waiting, perhaps, unconscious expectation, were merely the prelude to the great years in office which form the central theme of the book. There is, however, one detail during the Shastri interlude which is significant—her decision to go to Madras precisely at the moment of the anti-Hindi riots. She was only Information Minister, a junior member of the Cabinet, but her immediate response was intensely personal. Nehru used to do this when there was trouble in any part of Delhi or, for that matter, in other parts of India, in Calcutta, for example. The need to be identified with ordinary people, to be at the centre of the scene when mass movements and great tragedies were taking place is something which made her an inevitable leader.

She had resolutely refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Equally persistently she had maintained that the Pakistani nuclear bomb would be a serious threat to India and would invite "appropriate Indian response". On what this response would be she was deliberately ambiguous.

In the last week of August, however, in reply to a parliamentary question, she made the extraordinary statement that India "need not go nuclear even after Pakistan has acquired the nuclear bomb". Among those concerned with nuclear policy there was alarm and dismay. But she seemed not to notice.

When I raised the matter with her she replied, as was her wont in such circumstances, rather tersely: "What security will nuclear weapons give us or them?" I replied that absence of nuclear weapons on one side while the other side had them could cause a lot of insecurity and scope for blackmail. She kept quiet.

I asked whether she really wanted to convey to Pakistan the message that was contained in her statement in Parliament. This time she perked up.

"Do you realise," she asked, "that I was answering a question on the Six-Nation Appeal for Nuclear Sanity we have issued calling for a total elimination of nuclear weapons? Someone brought in the Pakistani bomb. Did you expect me to say that we would make the Bomb?" After a pause, she added: "In any case I do believe that nuclear weapons can do no good to us or the Pakistanis; nor have they done any good to the Chinese."

Transcending all this, however, were her two most outstanding contributions which—it can be said without fear of contradiction—could not be equalled by any of her contemporaries, friend or foe.

To take them up in the reverse order of importance, her empathy with the Indian people, especially the poor, the deprived and the downtrodden, had to be seen to be believed. . . .

At work here was something much more than the charisma and magnetism she had inherited from her father. Her radical rhetoric might have been phony, her populist promises utterly unmatched by performance, but right until the end, the poor of India never ceased to believe that she cared. . . . .

Worthy of even greater honour and more enduring was her second shining attribute: her deep and unswerving devotion to India and to the cause of its unity. . . . She believed that excessive regional autonomy would destroy the central unity of the Indian state at a time when it was under stress from myriad challenges.

There is scope for honest difference of opinion on the issue and some of her policies and tactics could be open to objection. But there could be no doubt about the soundness and sincerity of her overriding objective. She could not have demonstrated her commitment to Indian unity more convincingly. After all, she laid down her life for it.

From Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography

The genetic link is important but the controlling personal trait was her own. She did not owe this to anybody. It is quite possible that she was not even conscious of what her father had done or would have done. It was this same courageous, almost wayward, impulse which took her to Belchi after the terrible massacre of Harijans during the Janata Government when she had retreated into anonymous isolation. It was the beginning of a splendid comeback trail.

All the major events in her development as Prime Minister are recorded in a carefully precise manner. The problems of the first two years with the syndicate, the difficulties of devaluation and the Election of 1967 and its ambiguous results are all dealt with in a comprehensive fashion. What is missing in the story of these years as recounted in this book are the important foreign policy developments in India's relations with Pakistan and the Soviet Union. This was an important period of transition. The Soviet Union in the post-Tashkent phase had justifiable ambitions of a mediatory role which led to arms offers to Pakistan. This led to a firm enough reaction from the Prime Minister conveyed both through President Zakir Hussain and Commerce Minister Dinesh Singh in 1968. By 1969, all this had receded into the past and there were the first tentative steps towards new and mutually confident relationships which would ultimately be embodied in the 1971 treaty. It was during these years also that Indira Gandhi, in an unadvertised move, began to play down the anti-China debates in Parliament by stopping the issue of the White papers. By the time Mao flashed his famous smile at Brajesh Mishra in 1970, we were prepared for some meaningful negotiations. The East Pakistan crisis put paid to all this. The Bangladesh story has often been told but Malhotra's

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The churlishness and downright discourtesy with which she was treated in Parliament—the Speaker's attempts to come to her aid were of little avail and protests by Congress MPs inevitably led to unruly scenes—were to leave a lasting impression on both Indira and Parliament. Her father had wallowed in Parliament. He used it as both a sounding board and a forum for educating the country in democracy and egalitarianism. Indira developed for Parliament the 'kind of disdain it had shown her'. She started absenting herself even from important debates and, in the years of her supremacy, treated it with scant respect. During the Emergency she reduced Parliament to a mere rubber stamp. The foremost democratic institution thus got distressingly devalued in the world's largest democracy. . . .

From Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography

recapitulation is businesslike and near complete. The drama of the last few days is captured vividly. In one minor detail only there is an important factual error. During the actual fighting, Malhotra writes that D.P. Dhar went to Moscow as the PM's special representative to explain the developments on the ground to the Soviet leadership and came back after the discussions with the Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Kuznitsov, who stayed on in New Delhi until the end.

This is at variance with the actual fact which is more interesting. D.P. Dhar's visit to Moscow was scheduled on a certain date. On the day of his arrival in Moscow the Soviet Foreign Office suddenly informed the Embassy that a Soviet delegation was going to Delhi. Visas were immediately requested and granted. Mr Fomin, the Head of the Soviet South Asian Department, made it clear that the Soviet Minister would be leaving many hours before the arrival of the Indian Envoy. There was obviously some unease in Moscow. This became clear during the discussions after Mr Dhar's arrival. The battle on the ground was not going as quickly as they had expected. In the meantime there were embarrassments in the U.N. All this was not directly mentioned, of course, but the indications were clear. Mr Dhar understood all this and handled the situation with great aplomb after a very long conversation, immediately after arrival, in chaste Kashmiri with P.N. Dhar, the Prime Minister's Secretary. Great care was taken to avoid ruffled feelings in both capitals. This is being mentioned only to show how very rarely Malhotra is wrong on facts. These details could, of course, be known only to an actual participant like this reviewer, and he should not be faulted for not having extra-sensory perception.

The descriptions in the book are at their best in the careful tracing of the tragic developments between Indira's finest hour and the Emergency. The central role played by Sanjay is brought out. At the same time at every stage in the sad story the negative contribution made by many great men on judgement and the final decision to impose the Emergency to escape normal constitutional processes is carefully evaluated and adjudged to be a major moral mistake in itself and the beginning of much worse things in the troubled development of India's democracy.

The years out of office and the authoritative role played by Sanjay in organising the return to power have their own interest. The sad aftermath in the young heir apparent's death and the truly heroic manner in which the political leader triumphed over personal tragedy, the later compulsive need to conscript an unwilling Rajiv to establish dynastic succession, all these are narrated in a forthright manner. The enormous damage done in those years to the Congress Party organisation both in the country and in the states, the inexcusable practice of replacing good men by convenient yes-sayers as Chief Ministers and the disproportionate importance given to exhibitions and extravaganzas like the Asian Games is brought out; all these are described in pitiless detail.

Individual mistakes, each one of them put together, projected a totally mistaken, self-serving even when sincere, approach to problem-solving in a very difficult environment. This was the time when trouble began in Assam and in the Punjab; and these troubles were allowed to develop into major disasters. The ultimate tragedy of the "Blue Star" and the assassination which came after, could have been avoided, the author suggests, if there had been a more rigid adherence to democratic principles at every level in the political system even after the return to normal democracy. It is a sad story but the person at the centre of it all remains a larger than life figure content to embody in herself the aspirations and demands, as she saw it, of a great country with which she identified herself in mystical totality.

At the end of this fair, coolly written narrative, one has an impression of a major historical personage caught in the coils of an inevitable national tragedy. The problems which face a huge developing society like India in the second generation after freedom were much more daunting than the difficulties which confronted Nehru and his colleagues. In one sense she was paying the price for the mistake of the pioneers but she added her own in considerable portion, to the accumulation of political errors over the decades. In spite of this tragic flaw, however, her achievement is enormous, both in intrinsic and in relative terms. Compared with other leaders of the developing world in her own time, she stands out as an extremely accomplished and competent politician. In comparison, however, with her great predecessors in the Indian National Movement she seems to be inevitably diminished because of her unnecessarily insecure and petulant behaviour during moments of historical change.

Inder Malhotra had many opportunities of interacting with Mrs. Gandhi during his long stint as a journalist in Delhi and Bombay. One incident deserves special notice. In August 1984, a few weeks before her tragic death, Malhotra had occasion to discuss with Mrs Gandhi India's nuclear policy. He was upset because in reply to a parliamentary question she made "the extraordinary statement" that "India need not go nuclear even if Pakistan has acquired the nuclear bomb". Malhotra notes that among those concerned with nuclear policy there was alarm and dismay. They had been reasonably happy with her earlier attitude, that of refusing to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty: she had also maintained that there would be an "appropriate Indian response" to a Pakistani nuclear bomb.

When Malhotra raised the matter with her she was quite clear. "What security will nuclear weapons give us or them?" When he pointed out to the Prime Minister that the absence of nuclear weapons on one side could lead to insecurity and "scope for blackmail", she kept quiet. Then she went on to say that with the Six-Nations initiative on nuclear disarmament currently being promoted by India it would be hardly consistent with India's part to say that "we would make the bomb". She added in clear, precise terms: "In any case I do believe that nuclear weapons can do no good to us or the Pakistanis, nor have they done any good to the Chinese."

This is a considered and mature statement of policy on an issue which, after seven more years, has refused to "go away". It would certainly bring small comfort to the many people in India who want the country to have the bomb either in the basement or in the battlefield. Here, from an obviously uncomfortable and unsympathetic source, is a testimonial to her clear rejection of the nuclear option for the country on the best possible strategic grounds. It also explains in a definitive manner her earlier refusal to follow the Pokhran explosion with a nuclear weapons programme. ❑

A paperback edition of this book published by Coronet and distributed in India by India Book House is now available. An American edition in hardcover has been brought out by North Eastern University Press, Boston.

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A Tribute to Professor A. Appadorai

M.S. RAJAN

Among the many pioneers in the early years of independent India was the late Professor A. Appadorai (1902–1990), perhaps the most self-effacing of them. For he it was who pioneered the establishment and development of the intellectual disciplines of International and Area Studies; but his great contribution was recognized and honoured only just about a couple of years before his death on 9 December, 1990. In January 1988, the President honoured him by the conferment of the title of National Research Professor of Political Science.

While this unique honour was well and long deserved by him because he was the doyen of Indian political scientists, the more significant and durable aspect of his great intellectual contribution (under the leadership of the late Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, 1987, 1978 was the establishment and development in newly-independent India of the disciplines of International and Area Studies. He was also the doyen of scholars in International Relations and Area Studies in India.

It was he who built up the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA, which he joined in 1944, a year after it was formally founded), the once-great research institution in New Delhi, and founded in 1955 the erstwhile Indian School of International Studies (presently, the School of International Studies (SIS) of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. As the Secretary (and later Secretary-General) of the ICWA (until 1955), he started the *India Quarterly* (1945) and *Foreign Affairs Reports* (monthly), got published many research studies on international affairs (a rather new field of studies then), arranged some national and international conferences (the best-known being the Asian Relations Conference) and, in general, initiated the promotion of knowledge, research and publication on these subjects.

What was remarkable about his pioneering work was that he did this with little intellectual background on the subject until his forties. Before moving to Delhi, Appadorai was reputed to be a good political scientist in Madras—a senior lecturer in Political Science in Loyola College and author of a highly-regarded book *Substance of Politics* (1942). What is even more strange was that his Madras University doctoral thesis was on *Economic Conditions in Southern India, A.D. 1000–1500*, 2 Vols (Madras, 1936, reprinted, 1990). And yet, in a little over a decade after he joined the ICWA, Appadorai, with his terrific drive and zest, promoted the then-new field of International Affairs in India—both by his own study and publications and encouragement of others under the auspices of the ICWA.

What is equally remarkable, Appadorai achieved this under the difficult conditions of the early years of independent India. There were then very, very, few persons who could claim to be specialists in International Affairs, and much less in Area Studies, so that it was not easy for him to find persons competent to help him in his pioneering work; rather, he had to inculcate among persons intellectual interest in and knowledge of International Affairs—and this, despite the interest pioneered by the Indian National Congress for some years under a small band of leaders, the most well-known of them being, of course, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Also, there were in those years severe financial constraints in promoting public/intellectual interest on the subject; therefore, Appadorai (and Kunzru too) had to raise funds from public sources and/or seek the assistance of those who were willing and able to render honorary work. The most remarkable achievement in this respect was the funding of the Asian Relations Conference and the building of Sapru House (a memorial to its first President, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru).

Appadorai also built up (along with the president of the ICWA, Pandit H.N. Kunzru) the once-great research library at Sapru House, devoted to International Affairs (and later on to Area Studies too). For years, in the fifties and the sixties, Sapru House became the main intellectual/research centre for study, research and publication on International Affairs.

Appadorai became quite conscious in his work in the ICWA of the difficulty of finding an adequate number of persons who were formally, and regularly, trained in the disciplines of International and Area Studies—as in the case, then, of the United Kingdom and the United States, where university institutions had started discharging this function. And so, Appadorai's next venture was to establish the Indian School of International Studies for this very purpose, of which he became the founder-director. This was a pioneering, and even daring, venture, because in the fifties, there were very few Indian scholars who had formal training and qualifications to be teachers in the new post-graduate University School. Appadorai managed to secure the services of a small band of elderly Indian specialists and reinforced the arrangement by securing the services of many foreign scholars, not only from Western countries but also others. These first generation teachers not only undertook teaching, but also the training of young Indians in the academic discipline of International and Area Studies. Until the ISIS joined the Jawaharlal Nehru University (in 1970) it had only a doctoral programme, a rather unique situation in any country. The functioning of the ISIS as a constituent unit of the University of Delhi (1955–61) was rather difficult (because of the well-known traditional limitations of the set-up and procedures of Indian universities). Appadorai managed to circumvent fairly successfully many of them; nevertheless, he felt the pressing need for autonomy for the ISIS in order to develop the great potential of the institution. And so, he (supported by Kunzru, the President of the Board of Governors of the School) successfully managed to get the UGC and Government approval for securing for the ISIS the status of a "Deemed University" under Section 3 of the UGC Act. With this autonomy, Appadorai brought the School into full intellectual bloom during the rest of his tenure as the head of the ISIS (until the end of 1964).

The School trained a large number of scholars who came to fill positions in other Indian universities and research institutions and who, in turn, promoted the new disciplines of International and Area Studies in India. Appadorai also became the founder-editor of another new venture, *International Studies*, a quarterly which soon became famous nationally and internationally too.

Despite joining the UPSC as a Member at the end of 1964, Appadorai retained his zest for research/publication in the field of international affairs and India's foreign policy, and continued to do so after retirement (in 1967) practically until the end of his life. Even while his *Substance of Politics* had run into 11 editions (and 11 reprints), he managed to write/publish many books on both Indian and international affairs. He was unable to complete (because of poor vision) the last of his

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Dr M.S. Rajan is an Emeritus Professor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He worked with Professor Appadorai for some twenty years in the two institutions headed by Appadorai, the ICWA and the ISIS, and succeeded Appadorai as Director of the ISIS/SIS (1965–1971).

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major work, *India's Foreign Policy and Relations* (1985, 1988) which the present writer helped to complete. Appadorai left unpublished two manuscripts: "National Interest and India's Foreign Policy" and "Indian Political thought through the Ages: Chanakya to Ambedkar". These manuscripts are being prepared for publication soon by two specialists trained by him. Appadorai's interest was in promoting "humanism" as the panacea for the ills of international conflicts and disputes. A paper of his on the subject was published in 1988. He had also intended to promote a "World Humanist Society" through an international meeting of members of parliaments of the world.

Until the end of his life, Appadorai retained a deep attachment to the two institutions he founded—the ICWA and the ISIS/SIS. He was deeply aggrieved by the deterioration of the former in recent years and tried to stem the tide, but in vain. He was therefore very pleased (and hopeful) about the Government taking over (in July 1990) the administration of the ICWA but soon got depressed at its slipping back into the old management a couple of months later.

Appadorai was also helpful to the present writer (then, Director of the ISIS) in the negotiations for the merger of the ISIS (1969–70) with the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Until the end of his life, he was interested in the progress of the SIS and its teachers, many of whom he had helped train.

Appadorai's great achievements were due to a judicious, harmonious combination of three notable qualities—earnest and deep scholarship and a great talent as an educational administrator; it was also due to some remarkable personal/temperamental qualities.

As a scholar, he was a model for all—young as well as old. He was objective, despite the pressures and circumstances under which he promoted international affairs in the 1950s. He never seemed to be influenced by governmental pressures, despite his friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru and constant need for help from governmental officials. He retained a high intellectual integrity and inspired respect. He must have been one of the very few Indians in the early years after independence who never sought any personal favours from his friendship with Nehru. Said Nehru at the inauguration of Sapru House in May 1955: "The more intimately I have known of him, the more I have been impressed by him. He is one of those persons who do not work for personal advancement."

About Appadorai's scholarly qualities, President Zakir Husain wrote (in the preface to the Festschrift, *Studies in Politics: National and International* (1970) edited by the present writer): "His extensive writings are characterized by deep scholarship and convincing objectivity. . . Dr Appadorai is, indeed one of our distinguished scholars, of whom the country may well be proud."

Appadorai's personal and temperamental qualities—admired by all those who came to know him, especially his fellow teachers and students—greatly facilitated his work in both the institutions he headed. Probably, the most characteristic of his personal qualities was modesty and humility to the degree of utter self-effacement.

Appadorai projected the image of a modest, humble person, one who was utterly selfless and unambitious. But, at the back of these qualities, he had formidable courage in facing quietly, but successfully, any and all difficulties that he confronted in all that he did for twenty years in building up the ICWA and the ISIS.

Perhaps the qualities that capped his personal qualities were his deep devotion and dedication to the promotion of International and Area Studies. They were the mainsprings of his life and work.

This good scholar and institution-builder of Independent India does deserve a worthy memorial. Does anybody care, I wonder? ❑

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India's Other Other

Robert Sigele

It would be difficult to say whether we have more difficulty understanding the "otherness" of gender or that of class. For those of us privileged enough to be the studiers rather than the studied, the daily lives of poor women are at least doubly removed from our familiar world of book-lined studies, complex theoretical models, and library citations. Both social scientists and feminists recognize this problem far more thoroughly than they have even begun to resolve it, the first acknowledging the male Brahmin skew in their source material, the second acutely conscious that "a narrow stratum of urban, educated middle class women" has dominated feminism in India "while the reality of the lives of the vast majority of Indian women has been largely ignored".

Madhu Kishwar's words, just quoted, begin one of the two books most likely to help students of Indian society compensate for their own positioning in the matrices of gender, class, and even nationality. *In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi* (in a second edition from Horizon India Books, 1991) and Sumitra Bhave's *Pan on Fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Story* (Indian Social Institute, 1988) offer different strategies for understanding how many women live in India. Through the sixty issues that have appeared as of this writing, *Manushi* has profiled individual women, reported upon crises in women's affairs from around the country, exposed the complex collusion of customs and institutions and individuals that lie behind poor women's economic struggles, and explored artistic reflections of women's concerns through critical reviews and creative writing.

I know of no such journal in the world with so distinguished a record of achievement as *Manushi's*, and so this collection from its first five years is both an invaluable resource and a singular testimony to the energy and insight of *Manushi's* writers. Most immediately valuable to scholars is Madhu Kishwar's nearly fifty-page "Introduction" to the volume. Its overview is nicely complemented by the dense specificity of the articles which follow it, whether as the statistical and anecdotal evidence in reports on "Women's Lives" and "Women's Struggles," and "Caste, Class and Police Violence." Part of the sophistication of *Manushi's* approach comes from this blend of anecdote, sociological study, and courage in exposing wrong-doers both official and private, but part also comes from its steady recognition of the larger implications of every issue it touches. As Kishwar explains, "We must try to undertake the task of restructuring every aspect of our familial, economic, and political lives in order to identify and take action to unravel the connections among the various causes and forms of our oppression. By confining our concerns to narrowly defined women's issues, we shall only make sure that women remain forever peripheral to social decision-making." (47)

Robert Sigele, Professor of English at Virgina Polytechnic Institute and State University was in India for a year researching current Indian fiction. He is the author of Politics of Reflexivity *and* Suburban Ambush: Downtown Writing and the Fiction of Insurgency.

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In addition, then, to obvious issues like sexual violence, dowry-related domestic violence, and the hardships of household work and of the marginal jobs that push poor women's workday hours into the high teens, this collection also tackles a series of large social issues that affect painfully the lives of these women. Several articles exploring rural struggles document the difficulties in separating government resources (namely those of social agencies, the legal system, and the police and paramilitary forces) from the variously monied interests. Others study the disproportionate dislocation imposed by mechanization upon female workers and the equally disproportionate benefits to men of social programmes seeking to redress both the resulting and the pre-existing economic imbalances. Yet another focus is upon the spread of upper and middle peasant caste family structure vertically through social strata and geographically, a phenomenon significantly contributing to the deteriorating position of rural women. As Kishwar puts it, "...it is the hegemony of these castes' culture that has led to a corresponding lowering in women's survival chances. Several communities in the south, which until not very long ago were matrilineal and matrilocal, have been rapidly giving way to patrilineal and patrilocal family structures, with increasing male dominance and concomitant female isolation and dependence."

One great value of this collection is how effectively it makes such abstractions concrete and specific. Harder and longer physical labour, less food and medical care, and the lack of appropriate measures during pregnancy and childbirth all contribute to lowered survival chances. But the essays make equally clear the eroded quality of life of these women, if so western a phrase can even be invoked for those for whom bearing a son and terrorizing a daughter-in-law can be the only patriarchally approved acts in their lives. The sexual, social, and economic passivities required in such a culture essentially exclude women not only from the economic power of land ownership and autonomy of income and vocational choice, but also from the social and political power they might acquire if permitted freedom in public speech, movement, and association. It is one thing for us to know abstractly these things are so, but quite another to see it in an individual life and to feel that life rippling outward across the pool of statistican samples. To read and not be moved is a sign of moral death.

Drawing its title from a verse by the nineteenth-century illiterate Marathi poet, Bahinabai Chaudhari, the second collection renders in powerful detail the life experience behind her insight that "Life is a pan on fire/you have to get burns first/to get your bread later." As editor Sumitra Bhave makes clear in her Preface, the collection assumes that "The best way of knowing what the life of a Dalit woman is [is] to experience it, to be a Dalit woman; second best, is to step into her chappals, or her bare feet, through her oral history, in which she expresses herself in such a way that we can feel and identify with her and vicariously live through her experiences. The appeal here is not only to the mind but also to the heart."

No doubt the investigators' values affect these oral histories, as is inevitably the case, particularly when cued by the "multiplicity of group activities and exercises" with which they prepared the par-

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ticipants for the project. But by confining the social scientist's analysis to an (invaluable) introduction and allowing the bulk of the book to be the words of these eight Dalit women, *Pan on Fire* comes closer than any other resource I know to ferrying us across the boundaries of gender, class, language, community, nationality.

Sumitra Bhave's introduction touches upon many points that serve as useful reminders to those wanting to share in the object of this study of the Dalit woman, "an attempt to see what she sees herself as". We are, for example, forewarned of the primary force of values like *pativrattya* (fervent loyalty to husband), *yonishuchita* (in practical terms, only one man for a woman), and motherhood, values which, in the narratives that follow, have both punishing and enabling aspects in the women's lives. The introduction also makes explicit what one feels after reading the perseverance of the women, that "at the end of these narrations it is the men, finally, who emerge as the more pathetic". Social mores and violence bring status but not happiness to these men, their self-esteem abraded by their working conditions, their spiritual force dispersed by alcohol, their capacity to relate at best intermittent.

As for the women, Bhave describes well how the two halves of their self-image make a disabling combination. Both downtrodden victim and a Machiavellian manipulator of a survivalist, "the latter is always undermining the anger of the former, preventing its explosion into a coherent revolution". With "any conceptual basis for their behavior" at best liminal, they evaluate their own, often heroic actions "as deviant rather than as experimental", and it has been one of the effects of this Streevani project that "they felt a sense of power in the telling of their lives which led to a desire for action". And so we read these women talking about their lives just when they are themselves attempting to focus the cultural dispersion of their selves into a strategy of coping, even of resistance.

These narratives take us where even the extraordinary imaginations of fiction writers cannot—in one narrative, to the point at which "our" categories of sequence, consistency, and denotation fail to describe how her words work together. Rather than lineal order, time can be the competition among old ghosts haunting the present. Rather than consistency of factual detail one can find different but only partially formulated myths about her past dodging and feinting through the crossfire of events and associations. And in place of denotative precision one can find language failing its speaker's attempt to *say* what her upbringing has conspired to keep unthinkable. When the kind of selfhood known by the middle class is pressed by exigency beyond the coherence afforded by a basic level of comfort or security, one finds thought itself hanging from psychic wounds like old gauze.

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The specifics of that state of exigency are well-documented over the course of these conversations: the ogrish image of the mother-in-law, the nearly universal violence and drunkenness of husbands, the failure of the latter to save enough from drinking and gambling and philandering to feed the children, the numbing length and hardship of the workday in and out of the home, the barbs of caste consciousness aimed at them in school, the sketchy diet and medical care, the discomfiting intermittence of support from family or village or neighbours, the dark comedy of sex between ignorant newlyweds in an overcrowded room or its pathetic whimper of an end with husbands as insistent as they are insensitive in their lovemaking.

But there is also tremendous resilience and resourcefulness in responding to these difficult conditions. "I feel," says one, "that every woman must have both, the strength to bear hardship and the strength to fight it." To transform their relations from between the pincers, to conceive of a movement among the very ones held most tightly by the conventions of caste, class, and gender, these are achievements indeed. These women know quite well what they're saying about marriage as an institution when they recall their early married days with their husbands and "tell you I never even spoke to him until my eldest child was born". When they say "a woman's life is like an exile", they mean that Home is a myth of comfort, belonging, and respect. And it is the irony of the long oppressed one hears in this explanation: "You know, among us, a girl in her menses is called a 'brahmin' because you are not supposed to touch her!"

But we can be touched by these lives, for they are presented as unframed and uninterrupted as is possible for the middle class writers and researchers who bring these books to us. As Madhu Kishwar writes in a recent issue of *Manushi*, "I do not feel any sense of loss or disadvantage in working without the support of an ism. In fact, it gives me a much greater sense of freedom in trying to work out meaningful responses to our specific social situation for I have to assume full responsibility for my political ideas." *Pan on Fire* and *In Search of Answers* are two of the books most likely to give each of us a richer sense of the larger social reality for which we, too, must assume full responsibility in the silences and pronouncements we let stand for us. ❑

We regret that in Chaturvedi Badrinath's review of Mary Lutyens' The Life and Death of Krishnamurti, *in the March/April issue of* The Book Review, *the quotation on p. 25 col. 3 was incomplete. It should read as follows:*

"To deny knowledge, experience, the known is to invite the unknown. The total denial of thought, the idea and the word brings freedom from the known; with the total denial of feeling, emotion and sentiment there's love. The total denial of the known is the essence of freedom. To deny and stand alone, without tomorrow, without a future shattering through every refuge, every formula, every idea, every symbol and be naked, unburnt and clear."

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Also in S. Shukla's review of On Being a Teacher *in the same issue , p. 32, the opening sentence should read:*

As the editor's introduction points out, it is surprising that in a country of 34 lakh teachers , few, if any, books set out to review and evaluate the experience of teaching.

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Demolishing Stereotypes

NAYANTARA ROY

MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA: POLITICAL AND PRIVATE REALITIES 1890s–1980s

By Shaheeda Lateef

Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 230, Rs. 160.00

The legal aspect of change is perhaps the single factor which differentiates Muslim women from women of other communities in India."

In clear, simple prose Dr Lateef addresses the situation of some women in India, loosely grouped as "Muslim women". In the process she demolishes several stereotypes based on a tendency to emphasise the "Muslim" criterion and to attribute the problems of Muslim women to vague perceptions of Islamic laws. Dr Lateef provides, instead, a more pragmatic analytical framework through which to study Muslim women. As she points out, any meaningful study would have to take into account that these women are not only Muslim, but more particularly Indian and a "minority within a minority". This leads to an examination of the unique history of the Muslims in India as a minority community that has wielded considerable political power in the past; and importantly, of how India's changing socio-economic and political factor affect this community. She draws attention to the manner in which studies on Muslim women in India have often paid scant att-ention to the socio-economic stratifications between the women of this community, preferring instead to clump them under a general "Muslim" heading.

Instead, for the purposes of this study, a scientifically empirical study was conducted, after which, as Dr Lateef explains ", . . . the need for historical research arose because the survey tended to refute the conventional wisdom on Muslim social practices but could not reveal the basis for the continuation of such beliefs."

A historical examination into the status of Muslim women in India revealed firstly that prior to British rule regional differences accounted for more than religious differences regarding the type of rights Muslim women had and family customs. It seems she believes that the special position of Indian Muslims as a minority, although a minority that prior to British rule had considerable political power, is important in their reaction to the new dynamics of power control under the British. She describes the formation of what seem to be interest groups on a religious basis, and points out how the need for an interest or pressure group of sorts (in order to stay abreast of the prevalent political system) necessitated the formation of a "Muslim" rather than a regional identity for Indian Muslims. This portion could perhaps be slightly clearer, since the author seems to assume some background of Indian history. Also, the origins of the Hindu reform movements appear at times to be rather simplistically attributed only to contact with missionaries or British rule. However explanations of the complexities of these issues would probably have resulted in digression. In this section she does, however, present some interesting data on the differences in position between Hindu and Muslim women. In fact, when compared on a percentile basis, it emerges that more Muslim women were educated than Hindu women; many of the attitudes and customs regarding women in Muslim families were simply regional social attitudes and customs seen in the Hindu families of the same region. Dr Lateef's references and statistics are well documented and sceptics should have no trouble in verifying anything they may feel is worthy of suspicion.

The following section explains raised eyebrows on this issue by explaining it as a lapse of memory on account of the passage of the Hindu Code Bill of 1957. The early 1900s saw a strong women's movement in India. The strength of the movement seemed to be in its recognition of women's issues as a separate group of issues transcending regional and class barriers. Both Hindu and Muslim women were active feminist leaders. The passage of the Hindu Code Bill of 1957 helped slow down the momentum of the movement (since this concession to some of the most pressing needs of Hindu women slowed the tempo of demands), as did concern with the new socio-political circumstances of an independent India.

Dr Lateef makes the point that partition only exacerbated the minority situation of the Muslim community, for now they were more of a minority than ever before in India, and a lot of the educated Muslim middle class crossed over. This minority identity of the Muslim community fosters, for the sake of a unified appearance, a particularly traditional and seemingly hide-bound society.

Here, the survey of Muslim women based on their social stratification appears to belie this outward appearance. To a large extent the amount of decision-making power a woman has is proportional to the socio-economic position of the family and of course, her own status. Islamic restrictions seem only as backward as those of any other religion, be it Christianity, Hinduism or any other.

The problem Muslim women face seems to be a direct result of their being a "protected" minority. Instead of an equivalent of the Hindu Code Bill for Muslim women, there exists the retrogressive Muslim Women's Bill, a result of the Shah Bano case. The fundamentalists among the Muslims seem to have become the self-appointed spokespersons of the community and the government has accepted them as such. Interestingly, Dr Lateef points out that the fundamentalist arguments on the issues contained in the Shah Bano case are contrary to the Shariat. The government in pandering to the trouble-making capabilities of these people succeeds only in impeding the progress of the Muslim community as a whole, and does it in the name of an Islam that is not necessarily Islamic.

One is left with the understanding that the problems of Muslim women are not so very different from the problems of women from other communities, even given the lack of support available to Muslim women from the legal system. Even though such support is available for women of other communities on paper, access to it can often be a problem and is again dependent on socio-economic factors. At the same time it may be interesting to compare the adherence to Shariat laws in India with laws operating in Islamic countries, although it is not necessary or directly relevant in the Indian context. Also, this is probably outside the purview of this particular book.

In the final analysis, as Dr Lateef points out, development policies do not necessarily include policies that work towards improved conditions for women. There is a need for a stronger women's movement concentrating collectively on this completely separate subject, women's issues. The few tentative appearances of a semblance of a women's movement in various parts of the country are not sufficient in their isolation, neither are any of the "band aid" projects occasionally incorporated in intermittent pockets. ❑

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Inequity in Gender Relations

Rukmini Banerji

A HOME DIVIDED: WOMEN AND INCOME IN THE THIRD WORLD

Edited by Daisy Dwyer and Judith Bruce

Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1988.

This volume contains an excellent selection of papers that focus on gender inequalities in the home and provide glimpses into the intra-household dynamics of families in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

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Most usual economic conceptualizations of the household treat the household as a homogeneous unit. Yet from our experience in families, we are familiar with the conflict and cooperation that is part of the daily life in the home. We observe that a household is made up of male and female members of different ages who have varying needs and opportunities, and dissimilar powers and potentials. In many cases, we can see that the theoretical assumption of the household as a homogeneous entity and the implication that the beneficial effect of a rise in the earnings of the head of the household, usually an adult male, will filter uniformly down to all members of the family, does not always hold in practice. In the social sciences, the belief that the gains from economic development will automatically "trickle down" to all sections of the population has long been disproved. But, the notion of "trickle down" within the family is still prevalent.

A Home Divided challenges such standard views of the household. This volume contains an excellent selection of papers that focus on gender inequalities in the home and provide glimpses into the intra-household dynamics of families in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The material for the book was collected under the auspices of the Population Council in New York, from scholars working in a variety of social science disciplines such as anthropology, economics and sociology. In several cases, the papers represent ongoing research of those well known in the field. While the primary concern throughout the book is with the economic status of women in the household, its sources and consequences are analysed from many different angles.

In the selection of papers, a great deal of attention is paid to documenting the existence and extent of various kinds of inequity in gender relations in the family. For example, Mead Cain compares the living arrangements and the economic conditions of the elderly, especially older women in rural Bangladesh and India between those who have a surviving adult son and those who do not. Susan Greenhalgh has detailed data from Taiwan on the sibling position and amount of schooling in succeeding cohorts, as well as on the differences in education, income and occupational choice between brothers and sisters in the same family. Joan Mencher calculates the earnings of women and men and their contributions to the household in the poor households of rural Tamilnadu and Kerala. Eleanor Fapohunda looks at husbands' and wives' contribution to specific family expenditures among the Yoruba in urban Nigeria. In her work on women's budgets in rural Cameroon, Jane Guyer underlines the importance of studying individual income patterns along with individual expenditure patterns in the family as a way of studying allocational priorities and responsibilities. The micro-level data in the papers is rich, and many of the fine-tuned measures could not have been obtained from secondary sources. Yet, it would have been interesting to see research that used data from large-scale surveys or census material in innovative ways to study the same kinds of issues.

Moving beyond descriptions, and beyond the standard neoclassical and Marxian theoretical frameworks, several papers attempt to deal with the question of the determinants of inequality within the home. For answers, most of the contributors to this volume tend to look at the social and economic processes that tie women within the household to their larger family or kin group on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to the mechanisms that link them to earning opportunities in the outside world. In Cain's depiction of women in rural Bangladesh, we find that women's property rights are insecure, their access to gainful employment outside the home is low, and the probability of becoming a widow is high. In this context, a son is essential for a woman's economic and physical survival. For Taiwan, Greenhalgh argues that despite new opportunities for education and employment that have occurred in recent years, not only does the Chinese family structure continue to be patriarchal, but also that new strategies are devised for achieving traditional outcomes. She contends that the inter-generational contracts between parents and children have always been different for boys and girls; with daughters having to repay parental investment before they get married. When education or market work was not common for females, girls' repayment involved working in the home. But today, with post-primary education, girls are able to work and remit the wages to their parents. The education and subsequent work force participation of daughters in families in Taiwan then enables the sons to achieve relatively higher educational and occupational levels. While Greenhalgh sees women's labour force participation in Taiwan as a way in which the family subordinates its women, Papanek and Schwede draw our attention to a contrasting situation in Indonesia, where women's work outside the home is viewed as a way to fulfil individual as well as household goals. The development of work skills and flexible strategies for seeking earnings by women is attributed to various characteristics of the family structure. Indonesian families tend to live in relative independence from larger kin groups. Divorce and remarriage are more common here than in the Muslim populations of south Asia. This implies that a woman could belong to several marital households in the course of a lifetime. In such a scenario, it makes sense for women to invest in human capital and personal resources. At the same time, women's work and financial independence is socially well accepted. At the end of the volume, Folbre's eminently readable review essay serves as a useful guide to the inadequacy of past theoretical approaches and to the potential of current conceptualizations of gender relations within the household.

Many of the papers explicitly deal with the policy implications of such research. Mencher cautions against technological innovations that eliminate agricultural tasks traditionally done by women. She argues that in south India, since women spend a greater proportion of their earnings on household maintenance than men, reduction of women's earning opportunities will have severe adverse consequences for their families. Munachonga's work in urban Zambia clearly shows that income is not equitably shared by spouses. However, she points out that the husband's already strong economic position in the family is further reinforced by the government's social and economic policies.

The book is an important contribution to the growing literature on decision-making and gender relations in the household. It should be of interest to scholars as well as policy-makers. Together, this collection of essays argues persuasively that in thinking about issues of income distribution one cannot afford to ignore the forces and processes that work within the home. ❑

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On the Edge of Extinction

Dr M.K. Ranjitsinh

UNICORNIS: THE GREAT INDIAN ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

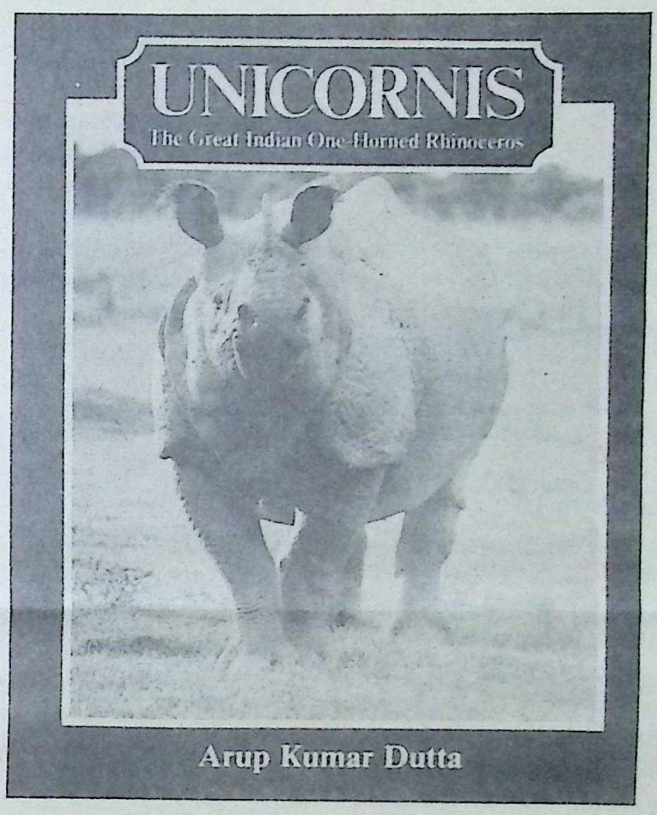
By Arup Kumar Dutta

Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1991, pp.142, Rs. 500.00

The great Indian one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is the fourth largest terrestrial animal in the world—after the African and Asian elephants and the African white rhinoceros. It is amongst the most sought-after, persecuted and hence endangered animals on earth, surviving only where stringent protection is possible and where the bits and pieces of the fertile land which is its habitat, has been safeguarded—in the name of the rhino primarily—from land-grab in a land-hungry subcontinent. It was an animal which was one of the first to arrest the interest of man, as the cave-paintings of prehistoric man and the seals of Mohanjo-daro testify. No wild animal has been brought so close to extinction solely on the basis of totally erroneous and make-belief properties of their physique, as the three species of the Asiatic rhinos. All of this, of course, is a part of the myth of this mighty animal. And yet we find so little has been written about them, particularly by the Asians themselves.

The predicament of the rhinoceros has prompted some of the largest outlays on its conservation in India and abroad. But if this unpredictable giant is to survive into the forseeable future, it will also need understanding and strong public support, much more than were forthcoming for the elephant and the tiger. In this regard, therefore, Arup Kumar Dutta has rendered signal service by writing this monograph on a much misunderstood animal. Though the author may not be correct in his statement in his preface that the Indian one-horned rhino is one of the least researched animals—there being a very erudite thesis on it by Andrew Laurie—he is right in his surmise that this is the first non-scientific work solely devoted to this rhino and meant for the "ordinary reader".

The book contains some very informative maps showing past and present distribution and is profusely illustrated, containing some unique, spectacular and interesting photographs. It is indeed unfortunate, therefore, that the reproduction of the pictures is not up to the standard and the colour rendition often poor which does discredit to the photographs. On pages 45 and 139 a gaggle of bar-headed geese are described as a flock of ducks.



Though some of the existing literature such as the publications of E.P.Gee, Straccy, Laurie, Prater, Lahan and Sonowal have been cited, the work is largely based upon extensive interviews and personal observations. The author deals in a forthright manner with the various facets of the *Unicornis*. The decline of the species, the causes of decline, the rhino in history and legend, the fallacy of the diverse properties attributed to the horn and flesh of the rhino, its physical attributes, its age—the longest age known in captivity to be almost 58 years—its behaviour, reproduction, food habits and preferences, predilection for defecation at chosen spots which is such a God-send for the poacher and a bane to the survival of the animal, and the conservation problems that face the species and those who are accredited with the task of preserving it, are all discussed. There are some very interesting and useful facts and statistics and some fascinating cameos. There are very pertinent details about the current status and distribution of the species, including the break-up for the various extant habitats, as well as yearwise figures of rhinos poached. The poaching of rhinos through electrocution from overhead high tension wires is cited. There is mention of 32 rhinos having been seen by Sonowal in one small waterhole, and how no one, not even Deb Roy whose personal close association with the rhino is today of the longest duration, has ever seen the animal wallow at night. And the story of the forester who told some tourists that he had eaten the flesh of rhino, believed to be the "surest passport to haven", and found the visitors wanting to lick him in order to imbibe the properties secondhand as it were, since they could not, alas, eat his flesh. With this kind of superstition and crass stupidity surrounding a myopic, temperamental yet instinct-ridden behemoth, there is little wonder that the animal faces an uncertain future and its guardians have their work cut out for them.

There are a couple of errors of oversight which could have been avoided. In describing the distribution of the rhino in the Himalayan foothills and "dooars" in the recent past, the name given is Buxar which is in central Bihar, while the author surely means Buxa, now a tiger reserve in North Bengal (page 53).

A word about the cost. At Rs 500 the book is overpriced and will not serve the purpose of educating the common man which is the professed prime target—unless he goes to a library.

These few drawbacks apart, the work is a most welcome addition to the growing literature on the natural history of the Indian subcontinent. It will help the cause of the rhinoceros and the rhino needs all the help that it can get and deserves it. As Dutta rightly says in the last paragraph of the book, "*Unicornis* is one of the world's most magnificent animals, and a source of wonder and awe to all who see it in its natural state. It is a harmless creature that has been brought to the edge of extinction due to the rapacity and thoughtlessness of man. If due to continued persecution it passes into the realm of oblivion, the loss would not only be to Nature, but to mankind as well." ❑

M.K. Ranjitsinh is an IAS officer and a world wildlife expert.

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MORAL LANDSCAPES

Shama Futehally

IRIS MURDOCH: FIGURES OF GOOD

By Suguna Ramanathan

Macmillan, London, 1990, pp. 243,

Among contemporary British novelists, the two who will be remembered as "great" are Graham Greene and Iris Murdoch. They seem to stand out even in a scenario which is full of superbly skilful, witty and attractive writing. Indeed, in terms of sheer competence the level of the native English novel has probably never been higher. We have the incisive detail and wit of a David Lodge, the verbal facility of an Anthony Burgess, the capacity of a Brookner or Byatt to discover real and lasting love somewhere underneath the plastic trappings of their society; we have the delicate precision of a Barbara Pym, the intense portraiture of a Susan Hill, and the deep seriousness with which Margaret Drabble looks at refractions of herself. Greene and Murdoch can display a fallibility which these writers do not. Yet why are they, in the mind of the average reader, so clearly—so unthinkingly even—set apart as being more important?

The facile but true answer is that it is they who are, in the rigorous sense demanded by literature, moral. This is not to deny the seriousness and compassion, or even the separately moral qualities, of the others. But it is Greene and Murdoch alone who are entirely structured by the moral. To be moral in this sense is to question or affirm the basic value of human life, and to question or affirm the value of a particular manner of acting.

For the great Victorian novelists, questioning the value of life was not very different from questioning it as lived in their own society. In modern times it is no longer possible to believe that a certain society or set of norms is the only one possible; hence you cannot be moral in the sense I mean, without looking beyond the values of your immediate social group.

Now it is fairly obvious that most British novelists writing today do not go beyond their own society either in terms of place, or time, or modes of thought. A David Lodge will expend his formidable skills of observation and wit to say nothing more startling than that British businessmen and students of literature should know more about each other (*Nice Work*). An unexceptionable view, but not likely to shake society to its foundations. In the same way, the Booker Prize winner Penelope Lively can produce a novel about adultery (*The Road to Lichfield*) which is supremely well written but takes almost no view of adultery at all, presumably because that is the prevailing attitude in modern-day Britain.

▼

This Other—that is, the experience or apprehension of another order of being—is brought, in Murdoch, slap bang against everyday realities. The clash can be resounding.

▲

Given this background, the effort of Murdoch and Greene to move beyond their society takes on heroic proportions. Greene's method of doing so is well enough known. He simply goes away. In Greeneland, unhampered by the mores of his particular social group, life confronts death, black confronts white, the believer confronts the sceptic, efforts to do good show up as futile, or absurd, or valiant, in a pitiless landscape.

Murdoch's method is almost completely the opposite. She does not go away; she stays exactly where she is. She does not seek her subject-matter in such things as unemployment or racism or social oppression or other situations which might be said to be instinct with "meaning"; she remains squarely with the upper-middle class. What Murdoch does do is to move outside her characters' environment in terms of spiritual perspective. Although the said characters are placed firmly in today's Britain, they are relentlessly subjected to, made to confront, seen to deny, required to struggle with, or to be defeated by, a light from outside—not a great golden radiance or anything of the sort, possibly more like a neon light, in keeping with our times—but one nonetheless which stands unmistakably as the Other.

This Other—that is, the experience or apprehension of another order of being—is brought, in Murdoch, slap bang against everyday realities. The clash can be resounding. Much has been written about mystical experiences, about moments of apprehension unrelated to time and space, but writers are usually polite enough to place these in appropriate surroundings—among some mountains, as it might be, or at least within sight of a rose-garden. It is only Murdoch who would have the effrontery to describe (in *The Good Apprentice*) such an experience as taking place in the middle of the London Underground (an Underground, moreover, reproduced detail by detail as we know it) or to physically bring Jesus Christ—thin, gentle, and wearing plimsolls without socks—into Anne Cavidge's kitchen before breakfast one morning (*Nuns and Soldiers*). It is worth remembering that this latter scene, far from being the absurdity which it might be, is one of the most memorable in Murdoch.

As these examples would suggest, Murdoch has little time for such things as neatness of plot or narrative. As Suguna Ramanathan describes it, "Murdoch's novels have been widely regarded as disturbing, unsatisfying ... as resorting to the lurid and exaggerated—wild scenes of disaster and rescue, sexual interactions regardless of sex and kin, 'unrealistic' twists, and so on."

Ramanathan continues with the revealing argument that for Murdoch to explore her centrally moral preoccupation, such lack of realism is necessary: "I suggest that these improbable possibilities which she chooses to present are actually externalisations of the endless combinations, often mutually exclusive and contradictory, that lie at the bottom of consciousness. Anything and everything may be entertained there ... it is this innermost, interior seascape that Murdoch is disclosing; it is hardly surprising that it seems unrealistic to the socially conditioned consciousness. . ."

Murdoch presents a face-off then between the worst and the most absurd that is possible in human life, and the most "divine" which the human soul can reach. Each is seen in its extreme, so the confrontation is complete. But thereafter, the human lives which find their way through it are not viewed existentially. (Murdoch, who is a formidable philosopher, has made her anti-existentialist position very clear.) In fact, the question very clearly posed is: Which is the best way to act?

Shama Futehally is a well-known writer and critic.

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What, in real life, is the best way to reach the Other, which is, to use her own language, the Sovereign Good?

This Sovereign Good appears, in the material world, to be located in a process of constant, clearsighted and selfless loving. But if it is overwhelmingly hard to reach it, it is also hard to quite *see* it, in the welter of the world as reproduced in Murdoch. And since she consciously resists simple definitions, the task of finding direction or pattern can appear very daunting to the reader.

Therefore it is very likely that the careful, consistent and convincing pattern traced by Suguna Ramanathan will remain a most valuable route through which we may find our way through Murdoch's moral landscape. Ramanathan takes six of the major novels—*Henry and Cato, The Sea, The Sea, Nuns and Soldiers, The Philosopher's Pupil, The Good Apprentice,* and *The Book and the Brotherhood*, and identifies in each a figure who is marginal to the action but central to the purpose. On a human stage full of selfishness, greed, violence, uncontrolled desire and actual evil, this good figure usually achieves very little. Murdoch refuses to succumb to any sentimental delusion about the worldly power of good. The figure's marginality, in fact his near-invisibility (for this I would read humility, in traditional religious language) is inherent to his goodness. In Murdoch, that which is at the centre of the stage is nearly always self-willed and deluded. But though he achieves little or nothing, the good figure "quietly goes on doing anyway", and his ineffectiveness makes no difference to the moral imperative to continue. The message appears to be that it is almost futile to do good, and it is absolutely essential to continue doing it.

The really original contribution of this book lies in discovering that in her choice of these figures, Murdoch covers a wide intellectual range through which the good has been viewed in human history: from formal, ritual-heavy religion to simple, instinctive action. The first "figure" represents formal Roman Catholicism—Brendan Craddock in *Henry and Cato*, the priest whose inner discipline matches even the stern one imposed on him by his order. He is posited against another priest, Cato, who is struggling with loss of faith. Cato begins to realise that the dazzling vision that made him fall into belief may have dazzled him too much to let him see the truth.

In the next novel Murdoch moves to a religion from another part of the world, which grew in different historical circumstances. James Arrowby in *The Sea, The Sea*, is a Buddhist, one who has achieved an enlightened self-effacement. He is posited against his monstrously egotistical cousin, the famed Shakespearean director Charles Arrowby, who has learnt nothing from Shakespeare at all.

In a steady process of "secularising" her theme Murdoch moves now to Anne Cavidge (*Nuns and Soldiers*), a nun who has left the order to search for her good in the outside world. She has her vision of Christ not in a monastic cell but in her kitchen, and what he tells her is that she cannot rely on him to do her work for her.

William Eastcote (*The Philosopher's Pupil*) has never even belonged to a religion as such; he is a Quaker. He appears barely three times in that enormous novel; yet his quiet tendency to affect those around him for the better is felt even after his death.

Stewart Cuno (*The Good Apprentice*) does not belong to any collective at all. He is simply a blundering yellow-haired young man, impelled by a need, often irritating to those around him, to do things "to make things better". He stands doggedly in the doorway of a woman who is frenzied with hatred against the young man who accidentally killed her son, and says things like, "it must be very hard for you to stop hating him, but I feel that you should try—perhaps—because..."

And Jenkin Riderhood (*The Book and the Brotherhood*) does not even say things. He simply does them, and what he does are things like lending a spare room, pyjamas and a hot water bottle to a girl who has had a nervous breakdown. "I am," he says, "a practical sort of chap."

Jenkin, who is "virtually unnoticed" until his death, is clearly a foil to the brilliant, egotistic, and naturally very visible characters who form the intellectual brotherhood of the title. They demonstrate collectively the inadequacy of either Catholic morality or Sartrean existentialism or logical positivism or Marxism or Stalinism to impose unity or coherence on the perceived world today. Hence Jenkin. He is the logical culmination of Murdoch's intellectual and moral journey which began with the complexity and formality of the Catholic order.

The seeming clarity of this progression is a result not of any lack of complexity in Murdoch, but of the sure insight of the present book. In the sprawling non-structures which are the novels themselves, these figures and what they stand for is almost hidden. Each sheds a light on the rest of the novel in the same manner as a small, obscured window might do on an enormous, jumbled, dusty room. It is the enormous room which almost wholly engages our attention; but everything in it shades and defines the light of the window. Because there is a relentless undercutting, throughout the novels, of all that which would be good. Possibly it is not good but only beautiful, like Cato's vision; perhaps it has too easy a sentimentality about it, like the actions of Gabriel McCaffrey in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, or a faint whiff of authority, as with the kindness of Gerard in *The Book and the Brotherhood*. It may be only the apparent goodwill which comes of unthinking happiness, as with Gertrude in *Nuns and Soldiers*. There is an endless range of shades in Murdoch's huge canvas, and by defining them all in lived action, she achieves a precision which no thesis could do. What she says about religion applies also to her own fiction:

> Consider also the adaptibility which a religion may gain from having as its centre *a person and not a set of rules*. (italics mine)
>
> From *The Sovereignty of Good*

So her good adapts itself to a multitude of situations and purposes, and is found or not found in the most unexpected of places, but it never sits back with a sense of achievement.

Thus it is that, having reached a seeming conclusion in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, Iris Murdoch has broken up the pattern again in her latest novel, *The Message to the Planet*. Here, as Suguna Ramanathan says, "all the pieces are up in the air again" because the seeming conclusiveness of art is as false to the truth as seeming goodness is to the soul. ❑

Attention Readers

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Mahasweta Devi's Writings—An Evaluation

Sujit Mukherjee

BASHAI TUDU

By Mahasweta Devi
Translated from the Bengali by Samik Bandopadhyay and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Thema, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 162, Rs. 85.00 (paperback)

This book is so beautifully printed that I wish the publisher had, for once, broken with convention and named the printer on the title-page itself. That worthy is no other than P.K. Ghosh (Eastend Printers, Calcutta). There can be few more scrupulous and learned printers plying the English language reproduction trade in India. His contribution to this book has been pleasantly acknowledged by Samik Bandopadhyay in his introduction. I must try, in due course, to guess the areas of expression in which this printer and these translators, perhaps even the author, are likely to have differed.

To take another look at the title-page, it mentions one author, one title and two translators, thus giving the impression that the same story has been jointly translated. Whereas the volume actually offers us two stories—the first and longer one, entitled *Operation?—Bashai Tudu* in the original, translated by Samik B; the other and shorter entitled *Draupadi* also in the original and translated by Gayatri S. Samik B. has provided an introduction (pp. vii–xiv) to Mahasweta Devi as a writer as well as to the background of these two stories drawn from the collection published in 1978 under the title *Agnigarbha* (which I would translate as "Fire in the Womb" rather than Samik B.'s "Fire in the Depths"). There is also the "Author's Preface to the present edition" (pp. xv–xxi), which, apart from three additional paragraphs, is more or less a translation of the *bhumika* Mahasweta Devi wrote for the Bangla volume some ten years earlier. No translator is mentioned for the English preface and we may presume the author produced it herself.

The stories are not easy to summarize or even to describe. The title-story (148 pages) tells of a tribal peasant hero known as Bashai Tudu, who organises and leads the action whenever there is occasion for landless agricultural labourers of the region to resist some particular tyranny imposed by land-owners with the backing of police authorities. In the ensuing clash, he is killed each time by the police or by soldiers, but he seems to reappear when he is needed again. And each time the corpse is identified by the leftist party-worker and small-time journalist, Kali Santra, through whom much of the story is told. The much shorter (13 pages) second piece *Draupadi* focuses on Dopdi Mejhen, a tribal woman Naxalite activist, whose spirit refuses to surrender even when she is captured and her body horribly violated. Both stories are set in villages and forest areas of northern and western Bengal.

Whoever reads these two powerful stories is bound to ask for more in English. She or he could try, in India, *The Wet Nurse* (trans. Ella Dutta) in the anthology *Truth-Tales* (1986) published by the New Delhi firm Kali for Women. Another version of the same story done by Gayatri S. and given the title *Breast-Giver* features in *Subaltern Studies: V* (OUP, Delhi, 1987) which also contains Gayatri S.'s discourse on this story. Represented by *Etoa Munda Won the Battle* (trans. Meenakshi Mukherjee, 1989), Mahasweta figures in the Nehru Bal Pustakalaya programme of National Book Trust. And if any Delhi theatre-goer saw the Hindi version of *Hajar Churashir Ma* (Mother of No. 1084) enacted some years ago, she or he will find this and four other dramatized stories in the collection *Five Plays* (trans. Samik B., 1986) published by Seagull Books of Calcutta.

Many years ago Adil Jussawala had complained while searching for English translations of stories and poems by Indian writers for the Penguin anthology *New Writing in India* (1974) that many of our authors are notoriously unconcerned about how well or ill they are rendered into English. This cannot be said of Mahasweta. Samik B. has testified, with regard to the plays as well as to *Operation?* that she produced her own draft translations for reference and collaborated in other ways with the process of being transplanted into English. I learn from a fairly reliable source that when the person commissioned to translate *Etoa Munda* handed over her rendering to the English editor of NBT, the latter was much dismayed to find that it differed noticeably from the version already provided by the author. How this editor resolved the situation remains unknown, but it is the translator's version which has been published by NBT.

If I may distend this digression a little, the blurb on the back cover of *Five Plays* says that Mahasweta began to dramatize her own stories out of a feeling that only as plays could they reach the large illiterate audience that is invariably overflooked by writers. I was reminded of the Telugu poet and activist, Cherabanda Raju, who began to compose songs towards the end of his short life so that he could address and persuade an audience that could not read. However, we learn from Samik B.'s introduction to *Five Plays* that Mahasweta's dramatization of *Hajar Churashir Ma* "has never been staged, though there have been productions of several 'safe' and neutral dramatizations of the novel itself, most of them in Hindi. . . . These productions have actually represented the Establishment's endeavour to absorb the exposure with which Mahasweta's novel and play challenged them". (p. xii) Was it to ameliorate this situation that Mahasweta's dramatization was translated into English, the so-called world language? But our Establishment mouths English when it is not speaking Hindi, so what is the way out? Four other translated dramatizations were added to make up this book, which carries the advice "Performance rights in English controlled by the author and the translator". I wonder how often these rights have been exercised and where.

Dwelling just a little longer on the making of Mahasweta's English career, I find that the operation began in 1981 when Gayatri S. translated *Draupadi* and wrote a translator's foreword for its publication in—of all places—*Critical Inquiry*, one of those hi-fa scholarly journals with which the University of Chicago Press keeps the academic world, not only of India, in a state of orderly bewilderment. I understand (that is, I have not seen it myself) the story reappeared soon after in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabath Alsel (1982) also published by the same scholarly press. Whether as a result of this projection or not, Mahasweta attended the Festival of India in France as a representative Indian writer. By now she is being heard about in the southern reaches of English-reading circles in Delhi, and Kali for Women find the translation entitled *The Wet Nurse* fit for inclusion in their first anthology of contemporary writing by Indian women, which reprinted within a year of its first publication in 1986. *Five Plays* also appeared in 1986 but not, I think, stirred by any international aspiration. Around this time Kalpana Bardhan must have begun translating Mahasweta (and also stories by Rabindranath, Tarashankar, Manik Bandopadhyay and Hasan Azizul Haq) for her selection eventually to be published under the title *Of Women, Outcasts, Peasants and Rebels* by the University of California Press in 1990, while Gayatri S completed the Mahasweta translation that would become *Breast-Giver* and find place, along with her *Draupadi*, in her collection of essays, *In Other Worlds* (Methuen, New York and London, 1987). In this book both Mahasweta stories are placed in the third section entitled "Entering the Third World", and what I

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m imagining to be "Operation Mahasweta" is early complete. Hereafter she will be the door to he Third World through which the First can enter, shered in by an incomparable *dwarapalika*.

I can't locate Samik B. as part of this "operaon", though I am unable to fathom why he has aken over Gayatri S.'s visually ugly and rhetorially confusing device ("The italicized words in he translation are in English in the original") which seems to be aimed mainly at the First World eader. To it Samik B. has added an element that is kely to aggravate rather than reduce the difficules of a reader in other worlds as well: "In our text talicization marks the English words used transterated by Mahasweta Devi, as also the Indian ords." (p. xiv) I should love to know how P.K. Ghosh was persuaded to accept these deviations.

Gayatri S. offers an explanation for her device, amik B. does not. Both choose to ignore (or omit o inform non-Bengali readers) the fact that much ontemporary Bengali speech at all levels of Bengali-speaking society is full of English words and erms. Mahasweta exploits this phenomenon brilantly in a number of ways both in what her haracters say and in what she has to tell us. I hould have thought that placing such English ords within single quotes would have distinuished them enough, while italics could have een reserved for the so-called Indian words. Then would be up to the reader to watch out for the ingle quotes and decide for herself or himself hich thus distinguished word is mere officialese, hich meant ironically, and which is a convenince available only to a once colonized people.

I have also wondered why Samik B. decided to g *Draupadi* on to the fairly long *Operation?*—ishai Tudu. The novelette, along with 22 pages of efatory matter, would by itself have made a zeable enough publication. He makes an attempt justify the adjunction (see para 2 on p. xii) but es not convince. Alternatively, having decided include the shorter piece, was he not tempted to oduce a new translation instead of using one at was done nearly ten years ago by Gayatri S.? d he succumbed, forthcoming Mahasweta buffs ho cannot read her in the original could have mpared two versions and wrung some more attage from this highly charged story.

Samik B. does say that he pointed out some issions and mistranslations which Gayatri S. s now corrected, thus giving us a revised, perps the definitive, version. However, one correcn remains to be effected in the fourth line. The iginal *Dui takmadhari uniform* has been transed as two "liveried *uniforms*". (p. 149) *Takma* (a edal-like object of brass or bronze worn by a rvitor) cannot be taken to mean livery, while ery and uniform can sometimes be the same. y other general demand would be that if Gayatri s translation had to be included, her translator's foreword should also have been reproduced. That foreword is best read along with the story, and its presence here would have made it more easily accessible to readers in this country than it is at present.

Reading the translation of literary texts that one can read in the original sometimes creates unexpected problems. After re-reading the originals in order to refresh my memory, I find I cannot shake off the impression that not only are the two stories very different in character but even the translators belong to two quite different experiences. Gayatri S. appears to have discovered (or this may be her artfulness) Mahasweta's stories fairly recently and felt challenged by the problem of translating them. In responding to the challenge Gayatri S. has defied convention (for example, in the matter of italics), taken liberties like converting the tribal deity Singboma into a cosmopolitan "their Maker" (p. 149), risked using a word like "ululate" (see the first line on p. 160) which is not listed in my copy of *LDOCE*,* and generally makes the story radiate a purpose that may well attach more to the translator than to the author. In other words, there is a strain of manipulation (womanipulation?) in the rendering of *Draupadi* which is wholly absent in Samik B.'s effort. Possibly out of longer personal acquaintance with the author and wider reading of what she has written, he has chosen a quieter, more neutral approach, more regardful (if I may use such a term) of the original. Given the variety of speaking tones and language registers that complicate *Operation?*, his was the more difficult task and, like Bashai himself, Samik B. didn't give up. If I have to find fault—and I must, to justify the role of reviewer—it is with the occasional lapses into idioms such as "rush to the defence", "spare a thought", "take the cake", "head on a platter", "treading on the toes", "incurring their ire", and so on. Such phrases, quite acceptable in themselves, puzzle me when used in translation because I can't guess what the original contained.

I would also question the undue pedantry of his altering the transliteration of place names like Bankrajhar (as spelt earlier by Gayatri S.) to "Bankdajhad" and Jharkhani to "Jhadkhani", complete with pronunciation dots above or below relevant consonants. I prefer Samik B.'s "kounter" (which removes it just far enough from English speech) to Gayatri S.'s "counter" which looks strange as a word uttered by Dopdi Mejhen. Gayatri S. has retained the British Raj spelling "Burdwan" while Samik B. uses the more contemporary "Barddhaman" (but we could do with one "d" less). Neither has dared to write "Kolkata", which is what Bengalis say, rather than Calcutta.

The language used by Mahasweta in these two stories is at times no less difficult to read and comprehend as it must have been to understand and translate. Gayatri S. has described it in her foreword as "A prose that is a collage of literary Bengali, street Bengali, bureaucratic Bengali, tribal Bengali, and the languages of the tribals". I wouldn't be surprised if the latter two varieties represent Mahasweta's inventiveness rather than actual speech. *Operation?* is even more varied in its multiplicity of languages, which is why I think it is more difficult to translate. At one place, a huge police sergeant is quickly identified in the original not only by his name, Ramavatar, but also by his reaction to some young men who have got into his jeep claiming they are Congress Party volunteers. Ramavatar snarls in the original: *"Teri Kangres ki aysi ki taysi—utar saley!"* This has been converted rather than translated to "Fuck your Congress. Get down, bastards!" (p. 94), which fails to carry the force as well the inevitability of what a stalwart Bihari policeman would say to young Bengali trouble-makers.

Readers encountering Mahasweta Devi for the first time through *Bashai Tudu* in 1990 need to be reminded—as indeed Samik B. has in his introduction (which I find more useful) to *Five Plays*—that her first novel *Jhansir Rani* was published as far back as 1956, that is, when a thirty-year-old reader of *Bashai Tudu* today was not even born. By 1983, according to Sahitya Akademi's *Who's Who*, she had written more than fifty novels (but some are really novelettes). Leaving aside the pot-boilers and pan-cleaners which most Bengali novelists tend to churn out every Puja annual time, Mahasweta's career reached one kind of peak with *Aranyer Adhikar* (1977), her account of the times and life, thoughts and deeds of Bivsa Munda, tribal rebel leader of the last century. This work won her a Sahitya Akademi award. But another phase of her career had already begun with *Hajar Churashir Ma* (1973/74) which, despite Gayatri S.'s finding it as written in "the generally sentimental style of the mainstream Bengali novel of the fifties and the sixties", would, I think, unerringly find response and win recognition anywhere in the so-called Third World. That could be for some writers, a greater achievement, than earning the approval of the First World. With *Hajar Churashir Ma* the author turned to recording the present instead of, as in the earlier phase, reconstructing the past. *Bashai Tudu* seems to represent a third stage rather than phase, a stage of maturation which probably merges the two phases. Where she used to make fiction out of history, here she is making myth out of fiction.

Both the Sahitya Akademi and the National Book Trust transcribe this author in English as "Mahasveta". If she is to continue to dwell in the English reading world, she will have to decide whether to "swet" it out or "svet" it out. I call upon Mr P.K. Ghosh to adjudicate. ❑

* Using these initials represents my feeble attempt to promote the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

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Penguin Delights

Sheshadri Iyengar

FOUR GRAVES AND OTHER STORIES

By Manohar Malgonkar

Penguin Books (India), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 142, Rs 60.00

PARTITION SKETCHES & STORIES

By Saadat Hasan Manto

Viking & Penguin Books (India), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 111, Rs. 125.00

THE LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

By Kasthuri Sreenivasan

Penguin Books (India), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 162, Rs 65.00

CARVALHO, MEN OF MYSTERY

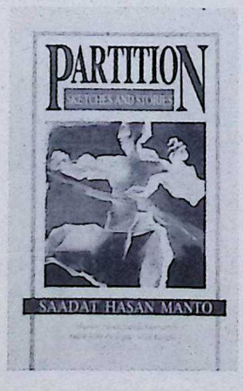
By K.P. Purna Chandra Tejasvi

Penguin Books (India), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 145, Rs 65.00

Considering that there has been a surfeit of writings on the Raj by all sorts of free-trippers on the nostalgia bandwagon, ranging from crotchety civil servants to juvenile journalists, it comes as a surprise to discover after reading Malgonkar's latest collection that one hasn't had enough.

Malgonkar has once again proved what a fine storyteller he is. By far the best pieces are those that are evocative of army life as it then was or still is, if one were to relax on the lawns of any Officers' Mess of an evening, put one's feet up while downing gin slingahs, while the "bearahs" are urged to put some "juldee" into whatever one has ordered and some otherwise insufferable ol' colonel reminisces of the days when men were men. The title story *Four Graves* is about Warren, a forest official posted to Karwar fresh out of England, and leads up to his return to his "homeland" to a lonely, colourless retirement. One can sense that he is tied down to the district without being overtly madly in love with the countryside or its inhabaitants. The "angrez-baiters" would perhaps vehemently disagree but Warren and his boss Carson (who with his wife and dogs were buried in the same district) were representative of a dedicated band of forest officials who were naturalists first and last when "ecology" or a separate Department of Environment were non-existent, even as concepts. While on the subject of *Four Graves* one can't help having a sneaking suspicion that Malgonkar is writing with tongue firmly in cheek. The graves of Carson's dogs, Sher Khan and Muggs, are found to have been converted by religious zealots to the dargah of Pir Hazrat Sher Khan and a temple to the Lord Manges(h) respectively, where pilgrims flock from far and near. A sobering thought for the Ram Mandir/Babri Masjid protagonists!

The two stories that strike a discordant note in this fine medley are *Palace Orders* and *Chikamaglur Hookshot* and could very well have been left out and thereby preserved the integrity of the themes chosen.



If Malgonkar recaptures Raj lore, Manto (*Partition Sket-ches & Stories*) revels in post-Raj gore. Cliches that spring to mind are sickening violence, brutal frankness and mindless mayhem. Many enlightened educationists may well argue that history is telling it like it was—warts and all, no frills and no editorialising or moralising. There is much to this argument (though, frankly, one doesn't know what) and, indeed, it would be regarded as being unfashionable to be squeamish. After all, what's a little violence between friends particularly if they happen to be the two largest communities in the Indian subcontinent?

With due respect to the aforesaid body of opinion, this reviewer believes that nothing, repeat nothing, would be served by reopening or even scraping the scar tissue off old wounds long forgotten. A whole generation or two of post-partition "puppies" has grown (if that's the right phrase!) with no direct knowledge or desire to know of the bloody holocaust that was partition. This breed is not likely to draw anything but the wrong lessons from the likes of Manto, notwithstanding the author's scrupulous avoidance of exonerating either community. Manto's episodes mainly revolve around the poor and/or the lumpen—pimps, prostitutes and policemen. For these classes, partition was a mere meaningless interruption in a fruitless and futile existence.

The translator (Khalid Hasan) deserves full praise for retaining all the flavour of the original work in Urdu.

All is not lost yet for lovers of Indo-Anglian writings as the books picked up for review bear out. Sreenivasan's bold portrayal of the "caste disease" that afflicts contemporary society in Tamil Nadu in *The Light from Heavaen* deserves full praise. Casteism as practised by the government in its constitutionalised anti-brahminism is felt keenly by Balan—a brilliant but poor youth—who is denied access to higher learning, for a degree in medical science, and employment, solely due to his caste. (It must be remembered that the Justice Party did to Madras Province some fifty years ago what Mandal has attempted in the north recently.)

Balan's sister is denied the happiness of marriage and children when her parents cling tenaciously to their caste and "dowry raising" is ruled out on account of Balan's father, Seshadri Iyer's, refusal to "exploit" the money-making opportunities available to him as a clerk in the District Collector's office.

Frustrated, Balan decides to renounce his brahminhood, discard his sacred thread, and enrol with "untouchables", the "lowliest of the low". He becomes a cobbler, then a scavenger cleaning the latrines, in a curious way atoning for the sins of his ancestors. Overcoming his hereditary aversions, he takes to "arrack" drinking and beef-eating, more, it seems, to prove an unstated point to himself than as a demonstrative gesture of conformism. Balan finds that strangely, even amongst the communities engaged in the most degrading occupations, there is a pecking order and acceptance of an outsider even with the purest of motives is never going to be easy. Balan's Christ-like atonement is not so much for the untouchability but for the degradation which denial of all knowledge brings. The Light of Civilisation has, he finds, eluded all of mankind.

For Balan, there is no turning back when he falls

Sheshadri Iyengar is an executive in the State Bank of India.

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Restrictive Choices

Makarand Paranjape

ANOTHER INDIA: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN FICTION AND POETRY

Edited by Nissim Ezekiel and Meenakshi Mukherjee

Penguin India, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 296, Rs. 55.00

From 1973 to 1979, the small but influential journal, *Vagarth*, published a spectrum of Indian literature and criticism. *Vagarth*, supported by the Joshi Foundation and edited by Meenakshi Mukherjee from Delhi, helped to build up a network of writers and translators from all over India; it offered a respectable forum for established writers and also an opportunity for newer talents to appear alongside. At least in this sense, it did offer an alternative to the state sponsored literary periodical *Indian Literature*; thus "another India". The journal was not really *avant garde*, but readers could expect fairly high quality writing coupled with sensible, fair, and competent editorial practice in it. As such, *Vagarth* performed an important role in the Indian literary scene and made a valuable contribution to the cause of literature.

The journal ran into twenty-five issues, a remarkable record for any small magazine in India, before closing down. The present anthology is a selection of some of the best poetry and fiction that appeared in *Vagarth*. The poetry was chosen by Nissim Ezekiel, while Meenakshi Mukherjee selected the fiction. Ezekiel's co-editing of this anthology is not accidental; not only was he a friend of *Vagarth* since its inception, but he also edited the best Indian journal of its kind, *Poetry*, prior to that. In that venture, Mukherjee was one of the friends and translators. Moreover, the idea of preserving the best of *Vagarth* in a handy anthology was Ezekiel's.

If I dwell on the historical background of the present anthology and also on the roles played by its two editors, I do so for a reason. It is people and the way they run institutions that makes literature. The two editors of *Another India* are today, without doubt, at the peak of their reputation and celebrity. Ezekiel may easily be considered our "number one" Indian English poet and Mukherjee our best known Indian English critic. The point I wish to make is that both Ezekiel and Mukherjee, in their own ways, have put in several years of dedicated and disciplined service to Indian literature. Ezekiel is not only a poet, but a critic, translator, editor, and great encourager of younger poets in India. His poetic texts do not give us an adequate idea of his very substantial and significant contributions as critic, translator, editor and promoter. For that we have to do some extra-literary exploration of the kind that I am doing at present. Similarly, through best known as a critic, Mukherjee is a short story writer in Bengali of not inconsiderable achievement and skill; besides she has been an important translator of Bengali fiction, and the editor of *Vagarth*. By their varied activities, both editors of *Another India* have served the cause of Indian letters. Those who aspire to reach their eminence, must also be ready to go outside the narrow confines of bread-winning academics to a larger sector of voluntary labour and service to literature.

Having acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Ezekiel and Mukherjee to Indian literature, only the latest proof of which is the present anthology, let me turn to an evaluation of *Another India* itself. Its value becomes clear when we remember that no anthology can be perfect or even representative. That is, if we look for a fair or just selection and representation of the "best" Indian literature of the 1970's, then we might be disappointed. Though the anthology contains works originally written in ten Indian languages—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Urdu and English, the bulk of the selections are from three languages: Bengali, Marathi, and Hindi. All the other languages are represented by only two or three pieces each. It follows without too much elaboration that we can easily find fault with the selection or point to this or that important writer who is not included. Mukherjee is aware of these limits and acknowledges them in her Preface: "There has been no attempt by the editors, for instance, to collect samples from all the officially recognized languages of the country, or to strike a judicious balance among the languages from which the translators have been included."

But such a disclaimer should then disallow the kind of claim that the publisher makes on the back cover: "Taken together this is an excellent introduction to new Indian literature."

This problem of representation and selection that any anthology has is compounded in this case by the fact that this selection is made from an already select body of texts in *Vagarth*. Or, simply

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love with and marries Lachi, an "untouchable" girl of the scavenger caste. His anonymity (and absence of any links with his "home" and his past) proves to be shortlived when news of a "brahmin avenger" appears in the press. When his identity is exposed, Balan finds himself face to face once again with the government's own unique form of casteism—jobs of municipal sweepers are intended only for the backward castes. But among the people he has chosen to live with, he is not only adopted but also glorified. Martyrdom and deification follow when Balan is killed by a union leader and a duel for the hand of Lachi.

All in all, the book is a brilliant indictment of Tamil society, and of the casteism practised alike by the brahmins and the government.

Purna Chandra Tejasvi seems to belong to another genre of writers altogether. *Carvalho* is based on the search for an elusive "flying lizard" launched in the dense jungles of Karnataka by Professor Carvalho and his band of natives. The narrator is a writer of film scripts who somehow finds himself drawn into the lives of the simple rural folk who assist in the search and ends up by joining the expedition. The climax is mind-blowing and comparable with the best in science fiction that would do a Ray Bradbury proud. Some portions of the story are, however, passages of pedestrian narration and weak humour. This is more evident in *Men of Mystery* where the reader encounters boredom cloaked in a vaguely, pseudo-philosophic dissection of human behaviour. While the principal characters seem to wait for the incessant rain to stop to resume their normal lives, this reviewer was left empathising with cricket commentators who were required to cover Mudassar Nazar at his strokeless best scoring the slowest ever test hundred. The translator, Padma Sharma, appears to have made a valiant attempt at injecting life into an insipid script. ❑

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speaking, the anthology suffers from an identity crisis—it seems unable to decide whether it wants to be the "best of *Vagarth*" or the best of "new" Indian literature. If it wants to represent not Indian literature of the 1970's so much as what was published in one particular journal, then why exclude other genres such as criticism or drama (though of the latter there must have been very little)? "Since this selection is meant for the general reader, we have left out the critical pieces and the discussion of controversial issues, which formed a substantial part of the journal's contents."

If the "general reader" is the target, wouldn't she benefit from a broader selection, not confined to what appeared in *Vagarth*?

In other words, if the anthology aims at giving the reader the best fiction and poetry of the 1970's, then restricting the choice to one journal's publications is a handicap. If, on the other hand, the anthology aims at giving the reader the best of *Vagarth*, then the leaving out of the criticism and the discussions is a handicap. After all, there have been anthologies of selections from other journals which tried to do justice to the journal itself; *The Best of Quest* comes to mind as an example. In that anthology we are offered a choice not only of the poetry and fiction, but also of the criticism, discussions, and editorials. If *Another India* suffers in comparison with the *Quest* anthology, it also suffers in comparison with an earlier anthology of *New Writing in India* (1974) edited for Penguin Books by Adil Jussawalla. The latter anthology struck the reader with a sense of freshness and discovery which *Another India* fails to evoke. Of course, the writing that Jussawalla selected was really "new" when the anthology appeared, while what we find in *Another India* is the established, even outdated mode in 1990. Not only is Jussawalla's anthology more exciting and extensive, but it also has a personality, a character, and a distinctive tone which the present anthology lacks. Quite simply, *New Writing in India* still makes an impression, while *Another India* already seems somewhat dull and lifeless after just one or two readings. Even the covers of the two paperbacks underscore this contrast: to the dramatic close-up of Anil Dhawan and Jaya Bhadhuri from *Piya Ka Ghar* splashed sideways on *New Writing in India*, we have some staid figurative ornamentation on a white background for *Another India*.

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What I wonder is that if this is Another India, then which is its "Other?" Is the "Other" literary India the established Sahitya Akademi version against which this India tries to define itself? Even if that were the case, we find that most of the authors in this anthology already belong to the establishment of those who have officially "made it."

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Of course, the sort of comparison I have been making is somewhat unfair. You have to judge an anthology not only for what it is not, but also for what it is. On the latter ground, *Another India* fares quite well. Not only is the selection eminently readable, it also has some very memorable pieces. My favourites in poetry are "Do Something Brother" by Gopalakrishna Adiga and 'I Alone Am Gayatri" by Sunil Gangopadhyay; I also like Ezekiel's "Crossroads." The best poem in the anthology is, for chronological reasons, the first: Amiya Chakravarthy's "The Same Picture", very ably translated from Bengali by Sujit Mukherjee. Here is its third and final stanza.

Look back again at the picture—
The same uneven stones of the road,
a few glittering shops.
A change of light in the mind reveals
the same house, clock, middle ages, new era,
smooth darkness between stars. Now compose
a mantra in verse: I have come, I have seen,
I know that the door had opened at a call
from over the seas. Carrying a lamp and key,
the guest comes down when his time is due.

"The Same Picture" not only looks different when viewed differently, but thereby highlights the problematic of time and perception.

Unfortunately, the poems don't come out very well on the whole, perhaps because of the difficulties of translating them into English. The memorable pieces of fiction for me have to be the excerpts from "The Virgin Fish of Babughat" by Lokenath Bhattacharya and "Living in Darkness" by Bhalchandra Nemade. Both are graphic and startling in their use of symbolism and atmosphere. Other choices that I liked include "Bharathipura" by U.R. Anantha Murthy, "Death is Getting Cheaper" by Baburao Bagul, and "Kanyakumari" by Arun Joshi. The selections from Hindi didn't strike me as being especially good, though there are nine of them in the anthology; the only possible exception might be Krishna Kumar's "Lankapuri," a very effective tale of the loss of innocence but with a somewhat unsatisfying conclusion.

A few words on the title before I end. The Preface tells us that it was suggested by V.S. Naipaul in a casual encounter with Mukherjee in Delhi in 1989. I hope that Naipual did not also suggest it to the editors of the journal *Daedalus* because their Fall 1989 issue has the same title. Of course, the issue was not available in India until January 1990 or so, by which time this book might have already been in press. But it is not just the repetition of the title that is bothersome. What I wonder is that if this is *Another India*, then which is its "Other?" Is the "Other" literary India the established Sahitya Akademi version against which this India tries to define itself? Even if that were the case, we find that most of the authors in this anthology already belong to the establishment of those who have officially "made it." In other words, I wonder if this is not really *Another India* at all, but the establishment to which we must now find alternatives: this "Other" India is always in the making, outside the centres of power and prestige, striving for survival at the margins. Certainly, when it gains the kind of recognition and legitimacy that a book edited by Ezekiel and Mukherjee, and published by Penguin Books confers, this India ceases to be *Another India*. ❑

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A Bonanza for Children

Anita Kohli

HE RETURN HOME by Sarojini Sinha, pp. 128, s 14.00

MACK by Arup Kumar Dutta, pp. 127, Rs 14.00

O.S. FROM MUNIA by Nilima Sinha, pp. 120, s 15.00

HE SHAMI TREE by A.K. Srikumar, pp. 95, s 12.00

ALU—THE BLACK BHALU by Juhi Sinha, Rs 8.00

NAM by B.G. Varma, Rs 8.00

HE EMERALD LINGAM by Madhavi S. Mahadean, pp.72, Rs 9.00

CAPITAL ADVENTURE by Deepa Agarwal, p. 120, Rs 15.00

UNT FOR THE GOLDEN LANGUR by A.K. ikumar, pp. 79, Rs 12.00

UDIYA by Alaka Shankar, Rs 8.00

HEERU by Murkot Kunhappa, Rs 8.00

SHOK'S NEW FRIENDS by Deepa Agarwal, s 8.00

EAR PICHY by Simren Kaur, pp. 64, Rs 10.00

ildren's Book Trust, New Delhi

an attractive and interesting package from the ildren's Book Trust comes a bonanza for chil-en. If books for children haven't come the whole y in India at least they have come part of the y. They are based in the Indian milieu, have tinctly Indian themes and are peppered with miliar names and vernacular words. The chil-en find themselves meeting dhaba-workers, oeshine boys, CBI agents, the Bishnois and a rde of other interesting familiar people. Most of books have won awards in all India competi-ns in different categories. There is fiction based natural history, wildlife, the environment or adventure. They are located in Delhi, the nas forest, Rajasthan, the North, South, East, West. There is knowledge, danger, friendship, ial awareness and fun. What is perhaps even ter is that they are attractively presented at an rdable price.

The Shami Tree, Hunt for the Golden Langur and *r Pichy* are award-winning books in the natural history category. *The Shami Tree* is set in pre-independence India and is an adventure story based on the Bishnois of Rajasthan, a tribe that holds plants and animals dearer than their own lives. It combines adventure with knowledge about the desert and its people and teaches concern for the environment in the nicest possible way. The heroine is a plucky little girl Ratni and Hindus and Muslims live together in harmony. There are no obvious stereotypes to take away from a feeling of reality.

The Golden Langur is based in Assam. The year is 1933 and the chief characters are Christopher Broad and Dhiman a young boy. The book is a jungle adventure which starts with a hunter's quest for ivory and horn and ends with his forswearing the hunt and learning to find beauty in the creatures of the jungle. The golden langur is the catalyst of this change. The book is full of the mystique of the jungle and adventure makes it eminently readable.

However of the three on natural history, *Dear Pichy* is a nature lover's delight. It is about a special relationship between a woman and a squirrel. It could only be based on personal experience, the sensitivity and wealth of observation could only have been the result of a relationship keenly felt.

Smack, A Capital Adventure, The Emerald Lingam and *S.O.S. from Munia* are all award-winning books in the general fiction category.

Smack is a fictional story about the drug racket. Through an exciting adventure story it takes children into the sordid frightening world of the drug merchants. Through the characters of Gulu and Ravi it brings out the rare courage needed to deal with the drug underworld.

The Capital Adventure is "capital" in more ways than one. It takes the leader through the sights and smells of Delhi and is also capital as an adventure for children. The loss of the "plans" and the children turning detectives, is just the sort of plot that would appeal to children.

The Emerald Lingam about the foiling of an attempt by some children and a pet goat to grab temple idols and the emerald lingam is set in Tamil Nadu. The story is full of suspense and the flavour of idlis, tamarind rice, and the sights of the temples of the south with their gopurams and idols. A little history enriches the book.

S.O.S. from Munia is an adventure sparked off by a message from Munia. Her friends Praveen, Sarika and Sunil set off on a trail only to find themselves in the middle of a mystery. A subtle taste of danger and of the ensuring terror makes the reader feel a sense of relief when everything comes out well at the end.

The Return Home won the first prize, in the Indian history category in the competition for writers on children's books held in 1987 by the Children's Book Trust. It is the story of Harihar Prasad, a young boy, whose happy boyhood is shattered when he finds himself alone in a country which is not his own. Belonging to an Indian family in Burma it traces the fortunes and adventures of Harihar's family from 1930 to the gaining of independence. The story is filled with incidents from the struggle for independence and imbued with the spirit of Gandhiji and Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It also gives an idea of what Burma was like before it closed its doors on the world, and is a book most children will enjoy and learn from.

All the books mentioned show a steady growth and improvement in the quality of children's books. However they have a way to go before they acquire the magical quality of Enid Blyton and other English writers of children's books. The reasons for this is perhaps the more circuitous plots, the lengths authors go to, in order to create atmosphere and establish identity, and the conscious efforts that go into making books educational as well. The tautness and crispness that makes a book un-put-downable is missing. The sprinkling of Indian words is interesting, but long sentences and other Indianisms dilute the quality of these books. A sentence like "That is why we have plunged into the struggle alongside of her" is jarring. Perhaps CBT could do with a better set of editors.

CBT has also brought out a few 12–20 page books whose attraction rests on their illustrations and not their text. It is difficult to comment on them, since there is a gap between the illustrations and the text. The illustrations are attractive and seem to be for 5–6 year olds, but the texts read for older children. This is particularly true for the book called *Onam*. Its text uses words like "apparel" and "thronged", in grammatical constructions that would make the English protest in horror. "As nature dons a new apparel after the monsoon rains. . . ." or "Vegetable markets become busy, thronged by people to prepare for the gala Onam feast" or 'Women clean the houses and their environments", cannot be condoned.

These books are very much like limbo, neither here nor there. Too little reading material for those who can read, and too difficult for those who are starting out. However, out of *Ashok's New Friends, Onam, Kalu—The Black Bhalu, Gudiya* and *Cheeru, Ashok's New Friends* and *Cheeru* are the most interesting *Kalu's* illustrations are self-explanatory and might delight a younger child, but CBT should reconsider this format in future.

On the whole, however, the fare is better than before and that is something all young children will welcome. ❑

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

MODERN NEPAL: VOLS 1 & 2, by Rishikesh Shaha, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1990, Rs. 550.00.

Very few intellectuals can combine the qualities of a social scientist and a historian. Such a mix needs both natural aptitude and training as Rishikesh Shaha displays in his writings. Shaha's aristocratic family background and upbringing have nothing to do with his mental make-up. On the contrary, his love for freedom and democracy has not prevented him from playing the role of an intellectual, despite his controversial roles of a politician and diplomat. Sometimes such dual roles of being a political activist and intellectual and writer tend to overlap but Shaha has skilfully managed to balance the two. Now his recent book on Nepal's history has added yet another dimension to his role as a scholar.

The two volumes of modern history of Nepal begins with a setting. It presents the country with a conventional introduction of geography, culture, economy and society. Discussing the role of value-position of the author, Shaha is unpretentious in admitting his personal biases and says: " . . . the interpretation of historical issues and trends is always influenced by the writer's value system . . . we must be clear in our minds that value-premises do influence the viewpoint from which reality is studied." (p. ix)

Shaha is of the opinion that the Rana system, in fact, was a safety-valve for safeguarding the cause of monarchy because, unlike England, Nepal did never witness a direct clash between the king and people. The Rana rulers who were at the centre-stage of Nepali politics, allowing themselves to be vulnerable to the forces of change, worked as a shield for the king. In 1951, the situation took a dramatic turn with the restoration of monarchy which, in turn, gradually entered into a conflict situation because of the "steady growth of the tension between the royalist and the popular forces in the politics of Nepal". (p. 247) The king's role became controversial in the post-revolution period at the same time helping to erode the popularity of the king. It was more clear following the extreme action taken by King Mahendra on December 15, 1960, of dissolving parliamentary democracy in the country. A direct conflict between the king and the people became a reality since the 1960 action. The drama was enacted in 1990 with the major political forces going against the royal regime. As a result, the demise of the regime was swift forcing King Birendra to concede the demand put up by the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front. The king has now committed himself to act as a constitutional monarch within the framework of a multi-party democracy.

Shaha gives high marks to King Tribhuvan, the grandfather of the present king, for behaving as a constitutional monarch. The author seems to be more sympathetic to him rather than an objective analyst of the post-Rana politics of the country. Though the then developing internal political situation had favoured the king to be more absolute, it was King Tribhuvan himself who had started the process of royal ascendancy stultifying the spirit of the 1951 change, underlined by his own proclamation of 18 February, 1951. Shaha has no other remarks on the status of King Tribhuvan than those of Joshi and Rose who maintain that King Tribhuvan was temperamentally more suited to be democratic than his two ambitious successors—King Mahendra and King Birendra.

Shaha's comparison of three historical actors—Prithvi Narayan Shah, Jang Bahadur, and King Mahendra is interesting. According to Shaha, "they not only fashioned strategies best suited to the needs of their time, but also carried them out with consummate skill. In doing so, they gained power for themselves and their families and also safeguarded the independence and security of Nepal". (p. 268)

The role of Prithvi Narayan Shah as a builder of modern Nepal is not disputable as the conquest of territories and stability provided thereafter proved to be conducive for the processes of nation-building. Jang Bahadur proved himself a hero by taking advantage of the unsettled political situation and turning it in his family's favour. The Rana rule established by him continued for 104 years until it was overthrown by the armed movement launched by the people. Although the Rana rule had the characteristics of kleptocracy, it could preserve the much-touted independence of Nepal. Foreign policy strategies undertaken by the Rana rulers did not betray the cause of the nation. It does not mean that such strategies were divorced from the interest of the regime.

From the viewpoint of national independence and sovereignty, King Mahendra's role comes under criticism. His two major failures were the dismantling of the first ever parliamentary democratic processes in 1960 and the demise of the so-called native model (panchayat system) nurtured and patronized by him. It was done by the people as the system was identified with monarchical absolutism. The royal coup of December 1960 was staged for "safeguarding national independence" and his native model introduced thereafter was to promote democracy. Now his regime has been rejected by the people as being incompatible with the larger national interest. Similarly, Mahendra's foreign policy strategies are gradually turning out to be nothing more than the continuation of policies of his predecessors. The secret agreement concluded between India and Nepal in 1965 had allegedly been guided by the regime's interest. Thus, Shaha seems to have drawn his conclusion in a hurry. He might have his own justifications for putting the three rulers on par but it is still premature to think along these lines. Written in a simple and lucid style, Shaha's effort is laudable. The book is dedicated to his late wife, who was a Rana daughter.

The book is meticulously proof-read and produced.

Lok Raj Baral is a professor of Political Science in the Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA'S RESOURCE BASE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS, edited by V. Vidyanath and Ram Mohan Rao, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 502, Rs. 400.00

Sound and planned resource base is one of the pre-requisites for industrialisation. However, developing economies have been facing the problem of ineffective and inefficient resource base for their needed transformation from agricultural economies to industrial economies. Hence, these economies have also been confronted with the problems of hunger, poverty, low productivity, and backwardness. In developing economies in particular, the existing resource base is not utilised to an optimum level or on scientific lines.

The book under review is the result of the deliberations which took place in a national seminar on Resource Base and Pattern of Development in India, held at Hyderabad where 35 papers were read by eminent scholars from all parts of the country. In consists of seven sections spread over 502 pages and 35 well prepared maps and figures. The book concentrates on resource base in relation to development problems, prospects and regional imbalances, human, energy and water resources, land and agricultural resources and biotic resources.

Section I deals with development problems and prospects of resource base at length and consists of six papers. It points out that "resource endowment may shape the form of economic development in a country or may impose

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POLITICS & HISTORICAL STUDIES

e Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in In-—Achin Vanaik. Dissects the forces at work in aping the world's largest democratic state. T.R. ublications Pvt. Ltd., Madras, 1990, Rs. 320.00.

mocracy and its Critics—Robert A. Dahl. The thor examines the basic assumptions of demo-atic theory, tests them against the questions raised serious critics (both adversarial and sympa-etic), and recasts the theory of democracy into a w and coherent whole; and discusses the direc-ons in which democracy must move if advanced mocratic states are to exist in the future. Yale niversity Press, 1989, Orient Longman Ltd, first dian reprint, 1991, Rs. 110.00.

mmunities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles r Socialism—A. Sivanandan. This collection in-udes incisive critiques of contemporary Marx-m, of post-colonial development, and of the rocentric assessment of imperialism. Verso, 1990, stributed in India by T.R. Publications Pvt. Ltd., . 200.00.

wards New Beginnings: A Global Perspective of the uman Dilemma; The Making of an Earth Citizen. roceedings of the biennial conferences held in the emory of Indira Gandhi (1987 & 1989) constitute e contents of these two inter-related volumes. he Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, 1991, Rs. 225.00 ch.

Pressure Groups & Democracy in India—L.P. Misquitta. This book seeks to fashion a tool—a tool of pressure groups—in the absence of which Indian democracy is deprived of its inherent meaning. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1991, Rs. 275.00

■ ECONOMICS

Sardar Sarovar Project: A Promise for Plenty—Edited by Mahesh T. Pathak. A compilation of papers by five experts who were associated with the planning of the Sardar Sarovar Project in the Narmada Planning Group. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1991, Rs. 75.00.

Multi-nationals in India: Strategic Product Choices—Sushil Vachani. This book examines the balance between the effects of multinational-specific factors and local industry conditions on the multinational subsidiary's strategic choices. Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1991, price not stated.

Three Deltas: Accumulation and Poverty in Rural Burma, Bengal and South India—Willem Van Schendel. Part of the Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives, in this eighth study, the author argues that the transition to modern mass poverty is, more than natural scarcity, backwardness, population growth or colonial capitalism, primarily the result of unequal relations between groups of people. Sage Publications, 1991, Rs. 295.00

Industry, Trade and Peasant Society: The Jute Economy of Eastern India 1900-1947—Omkar Goswami. This book examines four inter-dependent themes relating to the effect of unpredictable, exogenous cycles in world primary product trade on the demand for gunny bags and cloth, their effects on the manufacturing sector, how the mills put pressure on raw jute traders and suppliers and the consequences of such changes in the agrarian economy on landholding rural credit, indebtedness and tenurial relations. Oxford University Press, 1991, Rs. 225.00.

Indian Textiles: An Intersectoral Perspective—Edited by S.S. Mehta and Vinod Shanbagh. This volume examines the existing and past textile policies and the institutional framework required for the growth and development of the textile sector. Oxford and IBH Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1990, Rs. 160.00

Managing Rural Development: Health and Energy Programmes in India—Edited by Hein Streefkerk and T.K. Moulik. This book fills a critical gap in the literature by providing field-based case studies on rural health and rural energy for a broad perspective. Sage Publications, Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives-7, 1991, Rs. 220.00.

■ WOMEN STUDIES

Filling the Rice Bowl: Women in Paddy Cultivation—K. Saradamani. This book documents in detail

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nstraints on it". It goes further by saying that "adequate or excess endowent of resources itself may not necessarily lead to development, unless the untry has achieved sufficient level of technological development in utilisg such resources. It also requires adequate and trained manpower. Deficiences in particular resources may require particular strategies to overcome em. Shortage or surplus of trained manpower requires emphasis on right ducation and proper planning of human resources".

Section II is devoted to the relationship between resource base and regional balances. It comprises four papers. These papers opine that in India there e considerable imbalances in levels of development, between countryside d town and between regions within the country. Can we attribute this to fferent patterns of resource endowment and utilisation? Or is it the result of fective planning? Section II tries to answer these questions with the help of dequate data and an analytical approach. The scholars who have contributed pers to section II rightly bring out that "regional imbalances are manifestaons of a spatial planning without taking into account the location of proted development. The benefits of development in such a case tend to ncentrate rather than spread".

Section III attempts to analyse the various facets of human resource velopment which are essential for a sound and planned development of veloping economies in general and India in particular. The two papers in is section observe that "India with its population of over seven million is hly endowed with human resource. If we have to consider human reurces as a base for economic development, the qualitative aspect should be aluated and quantitative aspect alone may not be helpful for economic and cial development of the country. Hence, proper utilisation of manpower, eracy, physical and mental efficiency of the population should be the iteria for the estimation of human resources".

Section IV focuses on the various segments of energy resources which have en the missing link in the process of development in developing economies general and India in particular. The utilisation of energy resources to its maximum possible extent is the need of the hour. However, these resources have not been utilised efficiently and what is needed is a proper strategy. The four papers analyse the energy situation in India and seek to suggest a workable scenario.

Section V deals with the most vital and burning issue, i.e. water resources, which have started depleting in recent years. There are many areas in India where water has become a scarce commodity. This state of affairs has been due to lack of proper planning and implementation of various schemes for water supply. Under this section six papers are included to cover different facets of water resource development in different parts of the country. The section observes that "India's water resources are vast and varied. However, keeping in mind the demand for water from different sectors, the existing resources of India seem to be limited. Therefore there is a strong case for optimum utilisation of this limited resource for achieving a high degree of economic development and a better life for the teeming millions of our country".

Section VI deals with the close relationship between land and agricultural resources. It also analyses the interaction of the said two facets of development in India. The seven papers included in this section discuss the major constraints which stand in the way of proper utilisation of land and other agricultural resources. They further discuss the concept of land management resources and the degree of deteriorating forestland and wasteland to multipurpose silviculture/pastoral system adequately.

The last section is devoted to analyses of various problems of biotic resources in India. This section includes four papers and concentrates on selected regions.

The book has a wealth of information on India's resource base. However, the book fails to give a synoptic view of India's resource base because macro-studies dominate the book. Micro-studies on resource base are few and scattered. Only libraries can afford the book with a high price tag.

Dr Badar A. Iqbal teaches Economics in the Department of Commerce, A.M.U. Aligarh.

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women's work in rice cultivation, both in the fields and in support work, redefines concepts like work, household, etc. and sets out in an appendix possible measures to ameliorate the lot of women. Sangam Books (India) Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad, 1991, Rs. 150.00.

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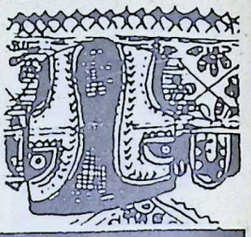

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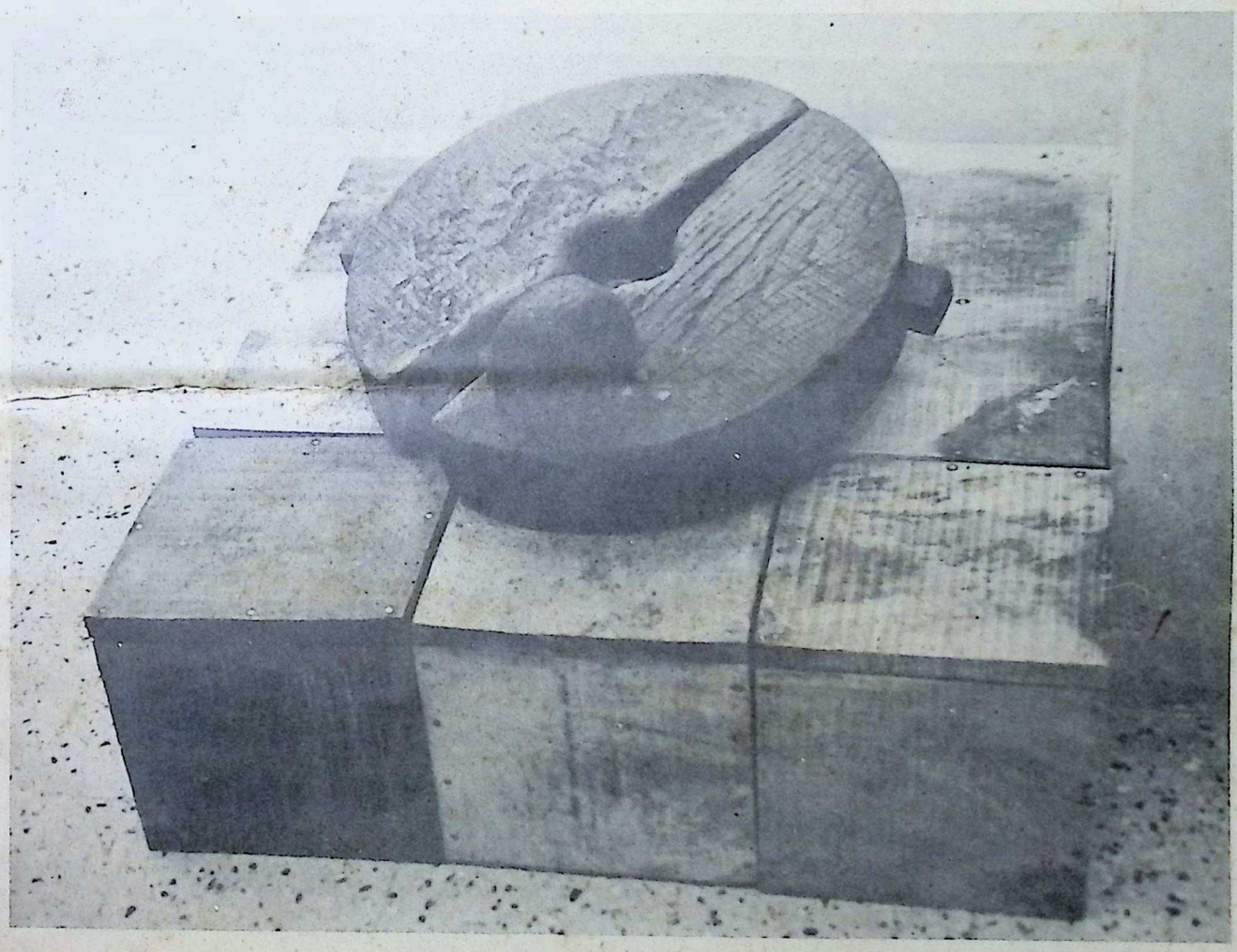

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THE FUTURE OF HINDI:

Promise and Peril

Harish Trivedi

The first of these twin special issues on Contemporary Hindi Writing, published last month, contained essays and reviews on Hindi language and culture and on Hindi fiction. The present issue carries reviews of some works of Hindi poetry, drama, memoirs and criticism.

Hindi poetry in the twentieth century has developed through some clearly marked periods and phases. As it weaned itself away from the traditional cloying sweetness of Braj *bhasha*, Hindi poetry in *khari boli* engaged with themes both new and old; with nationalism, in a rousing patriotic poem such as *Bharata-bharati*, and with newer retellings of some cruxes of our epics as in *Saket* and *Jayadratha-vadh* (all by Maithili Sharan Gupta). The 'romantic' *chhayavad* movement, at its peak from the 'twenties to the 'forties, imparted a new musical lyricism to *khari boli*, and a seemingly transcendent thematic preoccupation, which however has lately been shown to be not so much an escape from reality as an oblique but sustained engagement with it. Of the four Greats of *chhayavadi* poetry, Nirala (1897–1961) still dominates as one of the tallest Hindi poets of the century, while Mahadevi Varma (1907–1987) has undergone a revival not so much for her "Meera-like" poetry as for her recently rediscovered radical feminist prose.

The advent of modernism in Hindi in the 1940s seems in retrospect to have been the achievement largely of just one man, Sachchidananda Hirananda Vatsyayan 'Ajneya' (1911–87). Vastly influential for the example of his own work as a poet, novelist, journalist and, in later years, as a sympathetic and sophisticated expositor of the ancient sources of Indian tradition, Ajneya orchestrated modernist poetry in Hindi by editing three successive anthologies of seven young and rising poets each, the *Tara Saptakas*, picking his poets with sure and uncanny instinct; there was hardly a Hindi poet worth the name in the fifties and the sixties who had not been an Ajneya protege. It is another matter, of course, that the great majority of these poets also went on to discover and be converted to some shade or the other of progressivism, an ideology which Ajneya himself firmly and comprehensively resisted.

It is this broadly progressive content, expressed in a moderated low-modernist idiom often artfully blended with a more indigenous poetic form, which constitutes the keynote of contemporary Hindi poetry and is its staple. Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (1917–64) remains the major *pragatishil* poet of our age, while some important living poets besides those reviewed here are Nagarjun, Trilochan, Kedarnath Singh, Liladhar Jagudi, Mangalesh Dabral, Girdhar Rathi and Asad Zaidi. Unlike in some other Indian languages, Hindi has, after Ajneya's passing away, no Grand Old Man of literature. Some of the poets of the front rank have died relatively young, at the height of their powers—Vijaydev Narayan Sahi at sixty-two, Raghuvir Sahay at sixty-one, Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena at fifty-six, Shrikant Varma at fifty-five, Dhoomil at forty-nine—and there is a sense of expectancy and anticipation regarding the shape of Hindi poetry to come over the next couple of decades.

Somewhere along the line after the decline of *chhayavad*, poetry has, however, been displaced as the dominant genre of Hindi writing. A rallying cry for *kavita ki vapasi* (return of poetry) by Ashok Vajpeyi, poet and enthusiastic and resourceful impresario of poetry, has been followed up by an attempt to map *kavita ka janpad*, the constituency of poetry. Yet, much Hindi poetry today lacks a wide or popular appeal (unlike, presumably, in the more 'sounding' dravidian languages or in Bengali or Marathi), especially as one of the latest trends in it has been a deliberate move towards a prosaic mode: utterly unadorned, denuded even of image or metaphor, shorn of strong rhythm or any rhetoric, and striving austerely to attain the state of a plain, simple but 'true' statement. At the 'release' function of the newest book of poetry reviewed here, Namvar Singh aptly noted how Vishnu Khare's poetry is another milestone in the march of Hindi poetry towards the prosaic, how wholly urban or even metropolitan it is, and how deeply steeped it is in English idiom and even diction. Khare himself ironically reports a speaker in one of his poems as uttering a Hindi sentence such as this: "M.P. *men* progress *ki* possibilities endless *hain*."

Though purposely prosaic, Hindi poetry is reassuringly vital and productive—which is more than could ever be said about Hindi drama. A Hindi dramatist of any stature is hard to spot in the long years between Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850–85) and Mohan Rakesh (1925–72), and one of the more exciting young talents since Rakesh, Surendra Varma, has (as seen in our last issue) just defected to fiction. But, paradoxically, this very lack has turned into a boon, helped along for once by the official status of Hindi. When the Repertory Company of the National School of Drama was founded in 1964, it was decreed that it (like the School itself) would stage plays in Hindi and in Hindi alone. As the number of stageworthy Hindi plays would hardly have sufficed even for a season, the practice began of translating and adapting into Hindi plays from a large variety of Indian and foreign languages.

As a result, the Hindi stage has proved to be a veritable repository of the best contemporary plays from all over India, with consummate translations and imaginative adaptations of playwrights as diverse as Badal Sarkar, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar and Girish Karnad. The catchment area for the Hindi stage is actually even wider. For example from twenty-five years of fairly regular play going in Delhi, some of the outstanding Hindi productions which still glow in memory are Alkazi's *Teen Takey ka Swang* (1970; Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*), B.V. Karanth's *Barnam Van* (1979: *Macbeth* in *yakshagana*), and Prasanna's *Uttararama-charitam* (1992; Bhavabhuti in a 19th century Braj translation, in the *nautanki* style). Not only were each of these plays imported into Hindi; so were all the three directors. Through such enrichment, Hindi drama and stage have become truly pan-Indian, national and even cosmopolitan, in a sense that other genres of Hindi literature perhaps are not.

At a rough reckoning, about seventy of the approximately 110 productions mounted by the NSD Repertory Company so far have been of plays translated into Hindi. A similar broad and catholic range is encompassed by a remarkable Hindi quarterly devoted to drama, *Natarang*, which was started in 1965 virtually single-handed by the doyen of drama critics in Hindi, Nemi Chandra Jain, and has been kept going by him for well over fifty issues now (and thus for longer perhaps than any other drama journal in India except *Bohuroopi*). It declares itself on its masthead to be a journal

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In the global-electronic inundation by English of all other languages and cultures to which the floodgates have recently been opened in India through our "liberalization," will Hindi literature perish and go under, will it be "taken over" by something rather more consumerist, or will it on the contrary be newly stimulated and creatively revitalized by the challenge? Judging by its nature and past history, Hindi men *progress* ki *possibilities endless* hain*—if this is "Hindi" and such is "progress"!*

—

of the "Indian" (and not Hindi) stage, and one of the questions repeatedly coming up for discussion in its pages is that of *Hindi ke natak* (Hindi plays) vis-a-vis *Hindi men natak* (plays in Hindi). In its 50th issue, the Kannadiga director Prasanna offered his own acute formulation of this peculiar double-role of Hindi: "Compared with other language-groups, Hindi seems to me more tolerant and liberal. For example, I cannot imagine a National School of Drama anywhere except in Delhi. . . . Hindi is ready to pay the price for being the official national language."

It is part of this price to be paid that, through a huge official irony, Delhi should be so readily identified now as the centre of the Hindi world. This would have been hardly conceivable until about thirty years ago when there occurred, in the mid-1960s, a mass migration of all sorts of Hindi writers, teachers and critics from all corners of the Hindi hinterland into Delhi (and, more specifically, into that small new locality adjacent to the University of Delhi, rather hopefully called Model Town). Before that, the great centres of Hindi literature were Allahabad (in Hindi, often Prayag) where three of the four great *chhayavadi* poets lived and a fine balance between English and Hindi sensibilities was reputed to have been achieved; Banaras, rather more robustly indigenous, where had lived Premchand and Prasad; Lucknow, which was somehow congenial to the growth of the novel (just as Allahabad was to poetry), with Bhagwati Charan Varma, Yashpal, Amritlal Nagar and lately Shrilal Shukla all living there; and similarly Patna, Bhopal, Agra, Jodhpur, Indore and a whole host of other towns big and small, with their own literary circles and identity. Even now, letters to editors printed in various Hindi journals are often signed from little towns one mayn't ever have heard of, and from the unlikely address of Pipariya comes out one of the most determinedly cosmopolitan of all Hindi journals, *Tanaav*.

Yet, undeniably, the whole of the Hindi world has lately been so re-oriented as to feel that its centre of gravity must be Delhi. Kashi Nath Singh may still live in Kashi, but the huge majority of Hindi writers now lives in Delhi (in some numbers in the lower-middle class 'colonies' of Mayur Vihar and Patparganj, which are the newer Model Towns) and can be seen hanging around the green traffic roundabout at Mandi House from which radiate in different directions the three Akademis, Doordarshan and the NSD, many of the auditoria, and a couple of good 'little' Hindi bookshops. Such large scale desertion of the vast Hindi countryside can hardly be good for the long-term vitality of Hindi literature, for there is a danger now of Hindi turning into an overwrought "court language" such as Urdu was before, to its ruinous cost. (To self-referentially problematize the sociology of these twin special issues in this respect, 13 of the 21 authors reviewed here live in Delhi, as do as many as 21 reviewers out of 26—while virtually none of us new carpet-bagging capitalists was actually born here!)

If contemporary Hindi writing seems thus to be cutting itself off from its traditional roots, it faces a threat of yet another kind from the increasing hybridization of its register and diction. On the one hand is its notorious Sanskritization at unfeeling official hands, and on the other its mindless sloppy anglicization in common urban speech, through the frequent use of English nouns, adjectives and verbs within a Hindi sentence structure, as for example in this self-refuting sentence: "*Main to* as far as possible pure *Hindi hi* use *karta hoon*." This is not only a "chutneyfication" of Hindi but its outright khichrification, on a scale not suspected before. In the global-electronic inundation by English of all other languages and cultures to which the floodgates have recently been opened in India through our "liberalization," will Hindi literature perish and go under, will it be "taken over" by something rather more consumerist, or will it on the contrary be newly stimulated and creatively revitalized by the challenge? Judging by its nature and past history, Hindi *men* progress *ki* possibilities endless *hain*—if this is "Hindi" and such is "progress"!

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A Poet of Silences

In Memoriam: Shamsher Bahadur Singh

Ashok Vajpeyi

The sands of the Ganga shake in the sky like a mirror
I lie asleep in them like mud
And somewhere I sparkle
I don't know where

As "an inheritor of a tradition of the East", the poet Ajneya had once said: "Poetry exists not in language, nor in words; poetry exists in the silences between words." Ajneya had later gone on to complain of the verbosity of much recent poetry, though he was himself a poet who with his unerring skill and ability left little unsaid. In contrast, the poetry of Shamsher Bahadur Singh (1911-93), whose major collections include *Chuka bhi hoon Nahin Main* (1975; Nor am I Spent), *Baat Bolegi* (1981; Trust the Tale), and *Kaal Tujhse hor hai Meri* (1988; Time, I Strive with You), is poetry hesitating between the said and the unsaid.

In his poetry there is much that is often left unsaid. Not that there isn't to be found in him the essential poetic endeavour to bring into the circle of the said what was earlier unsaid. Nevertheless, compared to most other poets, he does leave more unsaid than said. This is not out of any moral or social diffidence. Indeed, most of his so called political poems aren't characteristic of him partly because they leave little, or very little, unsaid. If Ajneya is the poet of the word and its eloquence, Shamsher is the poet of stillness and of silence.

Though recent Hindi poetry, with all its social consciousness, may occasionally use the silent and the unsaid, the still and the hesitant, as mere poetic devices, it regards everything on the whole as sayable and possible. In a public world full of din and bustle which grows greater every passing day, there seems to be no room left for the silent. In fact, any haziness or doubt is regarded with suspicion, and anything not stated and open and direct is hardly allowed to exist. But in Shamsher, despite the clarity of his political commitment, there is a deep hesitation—a kind of trenchant diffidence, and a moral humility which looks at its own truth with some scepticism.

His "world has drifted beyond all these things and got lost," and the poet sees in countless mirrors "a dim rainbow composed of all of us." What is there in Shamsher lies very close to what isn't and what couldn't be. He may not "rue" what isn't,

A Poet Stirs Up

A poet stirs up
The waters of people
Mixes up all in one
The water of many mirrors
At the sight of which
We fall silent
And grow at last
Grave.

SHAMSHER BAHADUR SINGH
Translated by Harish Trivedi

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but he won't himself forget it nor would he let us forget it. It is this "impossible simplicity" which makes him a difficult poet.

There is little overstated in Shamsher and a lot which is understated. In this whole century of Hindi, hardly any other poet has stood hesitating between the said and the unsaid as Shamsher. Such half-statements or silences also have a profound connection with the sensuousness of Shamsher. Be it love or nature, the language of Shamsher makes a sensory appropriation of it not by penetrating its essential mystery but by enacting it. He is a poet not of revelation but of partial unfolding.

T. S. Eliot spoke of poetry as "a raid on the inarticulate", and such raids have been a defining characteristic of all true poetry. In his early poems, such as "Seeng aur Nakhoon" (Horns and Claws), Shamsher too has run the risk of confronting the inexpressible. In any language-community, the word must surely try to go where it hasn't gone before, but it must also leave some spaces empty—beyond and across words. The word cannot subsume everything, nor must it attempt to do so. The poetics of Shamsher is the poetics of such hesitancy.

Not that Shamsher hasn't a lot to say. His range is very wide, and the subjects of his poetry have included love, desire, nature, poetry itself, language, scripts, the people around him, other artists, writers, friends, other arts, and the various circumstances and events of life. So generous has been his sense of his surroundings that it has embraced the labourers of Gwalior, communist comrades, Mother Teresa, the widely different poets Ajneya and Muktibodh, the distant Neruda, and the indigenous Nagarjuna and Raghuvir Sahay. His vision inheres in his language, whose unique Shamsher-ness cannot be grasped in any terms or mode other than his own. And there is a place in this Shamsheriyat for time, truth, society and more.

Shamsher is not artful, but despite all his romanticism there is a classical discipline ever present in him. He does not let the merely personal intervene in his poetry through any inflation of emotion or speech. Shamsher may not possess the intellectual rigour of Ajneya or Muktibodh but he is a poet of emotional rigour. Of all those contemporaries of his who fought to be free of the romanticism of *Chhayavad* he was the foremost, but he also inherited in a greater measure than most others the sensuousness of *Chhayavad*. Over the last fifty years no Hindi poet has written more sensuous poetry than Shamsher, and he is, along with Ajneya, among the greatest love poets in the language not only of this age but of all time.

In Shamsher, things speak out, are seen, keep silent, and surround one. Hardly any other poet offers such a mix of the sister arts, and his poetry is not to be apprehended merely as poetry. It is so often picturesque, and it has such divisions and balancing of space, such play of shapes, such a symphony of echoes and resonances, that its density and syntheticity become even more difficult to decipher:

I am glad I'm alone
With no one around...
Barring an earthen jug of water
Barring a straw-mat
Barring a strip of the sky
Which is my neighbour on my terrace

Poetry was Shamsher's spirituality. He saw and created life through the perspective of poetry. At the same time, Shamsher was also the poet of sociability in a deep and rich sense, for his spirituality did not cut him off from others and the world around him. Even as he lived amongst others and moved with them, he was alone. This loneliness was a refusal but not a negation of others:

But forever
Alone—our earth
On which I stand: how lonely
Are the two of us in this world.

These days most people panic at the thought of being alone. Entertainment, ideology, and gigantic endeavours of one kind or the other are ever striving not to leave us alone. But Shamsher had the courage to be alone. The essential loneliness of man, as indeed his communality, is a spiritual condition. Whenever the poetic spirituality of loneliness in Indian poetry comes up for consideration, Shamsher will be found to be a leading figure of that tradition.

Shamsher, who lived through the better part of our century, has left behind a deep and ineradicable imprint on the mind of the Hindi community and on its poetic consciousness. So long as there is a place for poetry in Hindi society, Shamsher will remain as a shining peak who helped to transform poetry and thus the life represented in it, and to make it more beautiful and vivid. He will be remembered for ever as a chief architect of modernism in Indian poetry. Whenever the deafening din abates, there will be heard clearly and distinctly the tremulous voice of Shamsher, and we shall see in it "the wishing well of our soul." Shamsher will be with us even when he is gone—unique "amidst all the sad attractions of what is said to be untoward and yet-to-be", striving with time, and still singing "the utterly new and the utterly primitive raaga of true joy and peace."

Ashok Vajpeyi, a senior civil servant, is also a poet and critic, whose books include Bahuri Akela *(1992), an elegiac sequence for Kumar Gandharva. A book of criticism edited by him,* Kavita ka Janpad *(1993), is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.*

Translated by Harish Trivedi.

Poetry and Democracy

Harish Trivedi

KUCHH PATE KUCHH CHITTHIYAN

By Raghuvir Sahay

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 88, Rs. 50.00

RAGHUVIR SAHAY

Edited by Vishnu Nagar & Asad Zaidi

Aadhar Prakashan, Panchkula, 1993, pp. 212, Rs. 100.00

When Raghuvir Sahay died in December 1990, the prime minister of the day came to his funeral at the Nigambodh Ghat, not because Raghuvir Sahay was such a "great" poet but rather more because he was the kind of poet he was: a political poet in the best and broadest sense of the term, a poet of the aspirations and frustrations of the common citizen, a poet overtly and anxiously concerned with our democracy and its defects and deficiencies. At a memorial meeting at the Sahitya Akademi later, poet after contemporary poet acclaimed Raghuvir Sahay as the outstanding Hindi poet of the latter half of our century, and he was even declared to be one of the best poets of the world by a particularly enthusiastic young poet. Such high estimation may have been sentimental but it wasn't insincere; it may have been exaggerated but it wasn't absurd.

Raghuvir Sahay's family originally came from a *baiswari*-speaking village near Unnao; this was and remained his notional "home." He was born in 1929 in Lucknow, and took his M.A. in English there. He was noticed by Ajneya when still a student, and appeared in print in

The Hakim and the Woman

An old and always self-assured old doctor
Feels the pulse. The woman silent, waiting.
Twenty years of her youth compressed in a moment, now frozen.
With the pulse beat time ticks by but the woman is still.
She knows the symptoms she's going to describe.
A doctor's job is like no other job.

Her lips are delicate, her eyes large,
Eyelashes fine and long, her jaws set tight
Which, when opened, would flash her face's character,
Her fingers house-worn in domesticity,
Green bangles.
The doctor now looks at her face and finds
The years of her youth come alive on the patient's features.

The woman has aged, the doctor fallen silent
Not in wonder but in deep regard.

RAGHUVIR SAHAY

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The several fine poems on women include one on someone only slowly recognizing his own daughter as she walks into view, on women whose arid lives have passed without the lubrication of domestic female bonding, on an endlessly hassled and dog-tired mother still having to feed the baby, and a little masterpiece on a middle-aged woman quietly waiting to tell of her illness to an old hakim while he feels her pulse. There are four poems in a series offering vignettes of European "civilization," another on journeying far away but never really far from oneself, a trenchant but playful meditation on the cycle-rickshaw, and an explicitly radical one on a sleek train standing on a posh platform.

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1951 as one of the seven poets in the second *Saptaka* edited by Ajneya. So far, in most of these details, he was the typical, identikit poet of his generation; there were probably a dozen other poets at that time who began just as he did.

His early poems were about nature, love, women, family, aspiration, and some exquisite sensations; they were also, more unusually, marked by inventive word-play and wit, and were sometimes, self-reflexively, about poetry or Hindi itself. His poetry retained these characteristic features throughout. He is, for example, the finest modern Hindi poet to write on women—old, young, suffering, ill, mad, in love, and all alone—or to have, with searching self-awareness, treated of Hindi in half a dozen poems—with mockery, irony, true feeling, and exasperation. He also expresses in his poetry a particularly acute sense of both *kavi-karma* and *kavi-dharma*, the practical process as well as the vocation of being a poet.

The crucial turn in Raghuvir Sahay's poetry came early, when he arrived in Delhi in 1951 to begin a career largely of journalism, with various literary magazines, with the All India Radio, with a newspaper, and then, from 1970 to 1983, with the newsweekly *Dinman*, as its radically innovative and vastly influential editor. Meanwhile, he had served as a parliamentary correspondent for some years, watching our democracy at work from a ringside seat. He had also come in close touch with Ram Manohar Lohia.

Raghuvir Sahay came into his own as a poet, and as an unmistakably major poet, with his volumes *Atmahatya ke Viruddha* (1967; Against Suicide) and *Hanso Hanso Jaldi Hanso* (1975, Laugh Laugh Laugh Now). These reflect the first wave of nationwide post-Independence disillusionment which set in with the death of Nehru and eventually came to a head with the J.P. movement which was then sought to be crushed by the Emergency. Without any direct or crude references to particular political figures or events, Raghuvir Sahay caught in his poems this crucial transitional phase in the history of our nation with great sensitivity and much anguish. He devised a plain language and idiom in which mild and helpless lower class characters (the "*log*" or common people who in a Sanskritized form constitute our *lok-tantra*) could be named and identified as leading their still unimproved lives, and through which the brazen hypocrisy of our political leadership could be exposed:

"How the poor people are exploited!"
—You said, and laughed!
"Democracy on its last legs!"
—You said, and laughed!

Above all else, Raghuvir Sahay is the poet of the Indian nation twenty years after independence, at the moment of irredeemable disenchantment for the common man after two decades of buoyant hope and aspiration. The subaltern, experiential authenticity of Raghuvir Sahay's political poetry can be instructively set beside the rhetorical romantic appeal of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, probably the most highly regarded political poet of the subcontinent. In Faiz the idiom and the voice are intensely personal and traditional, and all the politics is still couched in the hallowed (or threadbare?) imagery of love and union and separation. In the scorching day-light world of Raghuvir Sahay, there is no room for such crepuscular haze, no need for such poetical sugar-coating.

Further, in Faiz, disillusionment with independence sets in right from that famous midnight of mid-August 1947; "*yeh woh sahar to nahin*" (this is not the promised dawn, etc.)—as dogmatically dictated by the Party-line. In Raghuvir Sahay, we have high hopes of independence first and only then the felt-on-the-pulse gradual and poignant disappointment: "*lalasa manushya ki til til kar mit gayi*" (Our longings were eroded bit by little bit). Faiz, after all is said and done, can be mellifluously and expansively sung. To get at the precise meanings of Raghuvir Sahay, one has to fine-tune oneself to his seemingly prosaic but subtly modulated rhythm and surprisingly varied syntax. Even the few poems by Sahay written in the *behr* or metre of a *ghazal*, such as "*Main nashe men dhut that. . .*" are deliberately rough and uneven, and bring one up short.

The fourth collection of Raghuvir Sahay's poems, *Log Bhool Gaye Hain* (1983; People Have Forgotten), which won the Sahitya Akademi award, inaugurated in part a new phase, which is more clearly in evidence in his last collection, *Kuchh Pate Kuchh Chitthiyan* (A Few Addresses A Few Letters). The most insistently and urgently political phase of his poetry seems to have passed; the speaker is no longer, in the wry title of what is perhaps Sahay's best single poem, "Ek Adher Bharatiya Atma" (A Middle-Aged Indian Soul), but an older and a wiser man—it is "Buddhe" (or The Old) now who mock our *loktantra*! Further, some half a dozen poems here are intense explorations of the needs and contingencies of a private life; these pregnantly phrased short poems are all printed as prose.

The several fine poems on women include one on someone only slowly recognizing his own daughter as she walks into view, on women whose arid lives have passed without the lubrication of domestic female bonding, on an endlessly hassled and dog-tired mother still having to feed the baby, and a little masterpiece on a middle-aged woman quietly waiting to tell of her illness to an old *hakim* while he feels her pulse. There are four poems in a series offering vignettes of European "civilization," another on journeying far away but never really far from oneself, a trenchant but playful meditation on the cycle-rickshaw, and an explicitly radical one on a sleek train standing on a posh platform. Poignantly, there are, too, four or five poems here on death, epitaphs and memorial meetings.

The volume on Raghuvir Sahay begins on the wrong foot by misspelling his name in its title (as just one long word), but then gets almost everything else right down to the detailed chronology at the end. The twenty-four essays, poems and memoirs on his life and works are varied and discriminating. Particularly insightful are the rigorously appreciative pieces by Ashok Seksaria, Girdhar Rathi, Asad Zaidi and Vinod Das. The thirty-eight page interview with Raghuvir Sahay is perhaps a little too reverent and therefore lax. But there is no mistaking the stature and importance of Raghuvir Sahay as a poet of the first order; it comes across from each page of this book, which is less of a pious tribute and more of a proper critical study.

If there is one contemporary Hindi poet who deserves to be more widely known, it is Raghuvir Sahay, and this book offers a whole number of compelling reasons why.

Harish Trivedi has translated many poems by Raghuvir Sahay, including some in consultation with him.

The Leader of Our Destiny

Who is this in our anthem, then—
This Bharata-bhagya-vidhata
That every rag-clad urchin sings
So blithely his guna-gatha?

With velvet carriage trumpet lance
Turbans and parasol
With booming guns and beating drums
Whose jai *is sung by all?*

When there march up half-maimed half-dead
Heroes from east and west
Who is it sitting on a throne
Pins medals on their breast?

This Jana-gana-mana-adhinayak, *then—*
who is this Great and Mighty
Whose drum we beat in hush and awe
Whose tune we sing absently?

RAGHUVIR SAHAY
Translated by Harish Trivedi

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POISED VULNERABILITY

Ramesh Chandra Shah

KOI DOOSRA NAHIN

By Kunvar Narayan

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 160, Rs. 75.00

Maturing as a poet means maturing as a whole man; and Kunvar Narayan—one of the pillars of 'Nai Kavita' movement—has gone on evolving and exemplifying this in his own quiet and unobtrusive manner. He has his own way with words and his poetry reveals a 20th century sensibility in its anguish as well as its resourcefulness. It is this unique blend which still continues to distinguish him from his contemporaries. His is a very modern, urbane idiom, adequately responsive to the crudity and violence of our times. He thus manages to steer clear of the pitfalls lying on either side of the razor's edge he has chosen to walk on: the modernistic lure of 'learning a style from a despair' on the one hand, and the progressive lure of sacrificing the all too human present at the altar of an all too abstract future.

The "Nai Kavita' (New Poetry) movement has been squandered away now and all its major voices silenced, except this lone adult voice crying in the wilderness of an all too robust, all too adolescent rhetoric in-charge of Hindi poetry today. Let us look at one of the poems of this collection beginning thus:

If I had the power to change
This world of mine
I would start, first of all,
With trying to change that 'I'
Which would have had the power to
change the world.

It is simple, compelling logic of sensibility shorn of all rhetoric and the lackof any imagery seems to clinch the issue. A poised vulnerability, and emotional precision have always marked this poet's way with words. As we delve into this multi-layered and multi-faceted work, we find not only familiar patterns, but also surprises lurking in every corner. Even the familiar acquires a new look (e.g. in the poems called "Saja sirf itni hai' and "Adyapi" Even the customary mythical and classical allusions open up a novel way of responding to ever-shifting reality. Look at the sequence of poems called "Ek Yatra Ke Dauran" (In the Course of a Journey). Is it just an extended metaphor or the inevitable objective correlative of adult experience expressing a whole range of emotions? Mark the 'anxiety' turning into 'simple gratitude' at the end. What sort of a resolution or reconciliation does it signify to a recurrent angst or moral dilemma, which we perceive to be as much ours as the poet's?

Then, there are those more overtly metrical poems organising reminiscence or observed reality in innovative patterns that should be an object lesson to younger

The Need for Poetry

Poetry can give one a lot
For poetry can be a lot
In one's life
If we allow it some space
As do trees to flowers
As does the night to the stars

We can save for it
Somewhere within us
Some such little corner
As would lie the closest
Both to the sky and to a sod
Both to man and to God

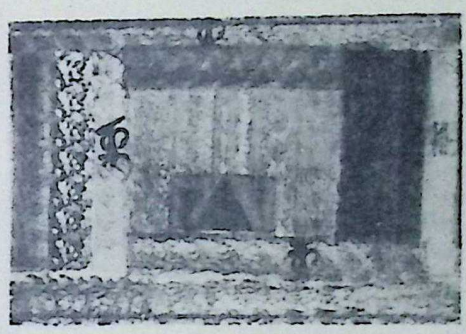
On the other hand one may very well
If one so wishes
Lead a life quite without poetry
Be in love quite without poetry.

KUNVAR NARAYAN

Translated by Harish Trivedi

कोई दूसरा नहीं

कुंवर नारायण की कविताएँ



poets. It was Auden who said: "Blessed are all metrical rules that forbid automatic responses/Force us to choose second thoughts, free from the fetters of self." Poems like "Rickshaw par", "Jab bahein failain" and "Ek Janmadin" should amply demonstrate and vindicate this commonsense. One finds a new satisfaction in the evocative tenderness of "Neem ke phool" and also in the unusually satirical "Ek Aitihasic hud se".

The opening poem itself presents a startlingly fresh self-image of the poet. Here, poetic sensibility becomes the epicentre of all upheavals. Here lies the recognition of an inner urgency to re-define the poet's vocation in terms of a moral imagination inclusive of contraries without which there is no progression. The poet longs to disturb and deflect the hidden source of Universal Energy, in order to transform the routine revolutions of this earth into a humane progression. "I long to shake it at that exact point in its imaginary axis"—says the poem, "Where it is most vulnerable to a poet's craft."

The very next poem presents 'the intricate horoscope' of a dewdrop robbed in a moment of all its splendour. This 'geometrically cynical yawn' is then confronted in the poem that follows, with what looks like a dialectically opposite movement away from the mechanical arrogance of birth and privilege. Eliot did not hope to turn again and Yeats welcomed reincarnation for the sake of the fecund ditch called life. Modern Indian sages have evinced a more progressive view of the self and the World than the traditional sages of East and West. Likewise, the modern Indian poet too seems much more positive and forward-looking than his European counterparts. In this poem, for instance, we find the poet looking forward to achieving a much more humane 'life' than the one he has been enabled to live at present. In the poem "Homecoming," "home" is not just the mechanically fixed pre-destination, nor "journey" just the means to that tame end. Home may turn out to be anywhere, and journey a rare opportunity of self-renewal. Even changing trains might become as exciting as changing thoughts.

This realm of possibilities, of alternatives within the human free will, has been a recurrent motif in Kunvar Narayan's work. This certainly is not the best of possible universes. Aren't all sort of creative possibilities inherent in the human mind itself? "Mind alone," says an ancient text, 'is the cause of bondage to and freedom from matter and circumstance." Then, why despair of mankind, notwithstanding the atom bomb and the gulags? The Vedic man identified himself with the fearless sky and earth; and modern man, revolting against the medieval images of fear, sought to establish an age of reason. Now he has to reckon with this desacralised wasteland. But why despair? The question forms itself: where does this new-found humanism of poets like Kunvar Narayan, Agyeya, V.D.N. Sahi and Vipin Agrawal lead? Certainly not, we hope, into the cul-de-sac of the European experiments with Truth and the consequent desolation of earth, but into some sort of a gradual transformation of the tragic sense of the West into the holistic perspectives of the East. A poem by Sahi makes the boon-conferring Gods tell man: "No one else can free you from your fear." *No one else* happens to be the title of

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As the Sky Knocks at the Earth

Prayag Shukla

SAB KUCHH HONA BACHA RAHEGA

By Vinod Kumar Shukla

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 128, Rs. 65.00

"On the way the past will be left behind/ On the way the future will remain/ When on the way nothing remains/ Then everything will remain in the past/ And in nothing/ Everything will be yet to happen."

When does a thought actually take on the form of a poem? Perhaps only when the thought, instead of dazzling one with its own brilliance, so dissolves itself in the poem that in order to recognize it and that which surrounds it we are forced, line by line, word by word, to complete the circuit of the poem. And when we find that in the course of this circuit we have found not merely the thought itself but also the fulfilment of that life experience through which the poet arrived at the thought.

Vinod Kumar Shukla's (born 1937) new poetry collection *Sab kuchh hona bacha rahega* ("Everything will be yet to happen") compels the reader's attention to this relation between poem and thought. It is worth noting that the poems are free from any cerebral pretension to discovering and presenting thoughts, and thus encourage us to believe that we may bypass "great' people's control over/supposedly great thought, great events and great problems, and discover them for ourselves in a simple, spontaneous way. On the one hand these poems are thoughtful; on the other, they free us from the intimidation of supposedly thoughtful posturing.

The Himalayas, Mars, Soyuz, rockets, the earth—these are not just big words for big objects—they are also living presences whose vibrations we experience within ourselves as we do the effects of everyday scenes and contexts. If the poet is able to bring the experience of these objects very close to us, it is because he knows that the noisy proliferation of words and statistics about war, the environment, pollution, exploitation and so on doesn't in fact facilitate a deeper understanding of these phenomena. He says:

I want to escape alive
From some war about to be,
That I may die to myself,
That up to my last moment
I may desire to live to eternity,
That a few flowers are,
That the world is.

This unexpected relationship between a few flowers and the earth is not merely the product of the poet's idiomatic skill or verbal condensation, but rather of his power to experience things utterly as a human being. He has this power because he recognizes the real relation between experiences and words. An invisible pair of balances seems constantly to weigh "words of the weight of things".

Vinod Kumar Shukla's poems are clear as water. They are not hard to understand. But the construction of words and thoughts is such as to compel us to go through them repeatedly and this repeated journeying is very pleasurable. Each poem of his demands several readings not because we cannot comprehend them at a first reading but because we feel a recurrent desire to fully experience his fully experienced world.

A reader of Hindi poetry, conditioned by *Chhayavad, Svachhandatavad, Prayogvad* (romanticism, anarchism, experimental verse) and so on, is not prepared for contemporary poetry, especially for Vinod Kumar Shukla's poetry. For instance Shukla's "Himalayas" cannot be understood from the poetic experience of romantic poems on the same subject written earlier. Shukla writes:

Someone knocks at this outside
As the sky knocks at the earth
No one with me
No one to be seen
But someone knocks at this openness
Who is he that wants to come?
I say, Come in, please.
Everything is open.
I saw that the Himalayas
Were visible to me.

For a long time, in Hindi, poetry has been contemplated from a great distance, Nature has been caught up in mysterious activity. There has been an emphasis on the vast expanse of the sea, the earth, the sky. But poets like Vinod Kumar Shukla bring sea, earth and sky as close as the sob of a little girl beaten by her father.

Vinod Kumar Shukla does not accomplish the feat of linking borders of sea, the Himalayas or the earth and sky to those of a home and neighbourhood in a small town. All he does is to view and to show the phenomena of the world and the earth from the perspective of a small grocery store in a small town or a city, in such a way as to make us realise that we have as much of a right to these phenomena as do all those powerful people and forces who treat everything as merely objects to be milked and exploited.

In the poem, "Somewhere fresh air was safe", when the poet draws a picture of a father and his little girl on a cycle killed in a road accident, he talks of the fresh air enclosed in the vehicle's and the cycle's tyres and in the balloon held by the dead child:

The little girl's breath stopped
She lies dead beneath the tree
In her hand a big balloon
Somewhat deflated
Yet enclosing fresh air
If just that much air had remained in her lungs
She would have died a few minutes later.

All the happenings in "Fresh Air" are full of irony, pathos and a warning. One is deeply impacted by the way the poem foregrounds issues of social disparities and of pollution.

On could write a separate essay on the Kunvar Narayan's book too. This is how the protagonist of the last poem envisages his role and destiny:

No, no one else
I myself at times have split myself
Like a false promise
Knowing that time and again
I have to come back
towards love
Have to retain faith in Man
Have to prove
I am not broken.
I am joined with all
At least as much as a poem.

Kunvar Narayan has no illusions. Accepting the dimension of human fallibility, he convinces his reader that his faith in Man, in spite of all that contradicts it, is no mere romanticism. One of the best poems in this book begins:

The first word was an event
And there was earth on which
To write something indelible
There was the ink of Time.

This indelible something is 'the priceless message of love' binding the 'other' in an 'indissoluble bond.' Man is the paper in this metaphor struggling towards articulation. That is why the protagonist thinks of "writing yesterday like history, today like literature and the conclusion like scripture."

Understandably, therefore, Eliot's 'in my beginning is my end' gets thoroughly reversed in Kunvar Narayan's poetic world. One of the last poems enacts this precarious hope. The plot here makes a reverse progression from death towards life, uniting both and celebrating the birth of a happiness out of an unbearable agony. As yet another poem enacts it, it is not just another revolution that the poet's hope clings to. The 'blood-red sunrise' there is 'not a trivial episode of human history,' but an eternally potential part of the interstellar biography of the cosmos itself.

It was in fact, a unique poised vulnerability, and an adequate syntax to enact it, that has characterised Kunvar Narayan's earlier volumes of poetry. To the discerning reader-critic, they revealed a significant, responsible modern sensibility realising itself in terms of moral imagination. The present collection which comes full 14-years after his last one, is perhaps the richest fulfilment of the expectations aroused by the poet through his steadily evolving work right since the 1950s. All the strands and all the abiding concerns of Kunvar Narayan's poetry through these decades are here brought together in sharp focus. This makes these poems the true witness of our turbulent times.

Ramesh Chandra Shah, novelist, dramatist and critic, teaches English in Hamidia College, Bhopal. His book, Bhoolane ke Viruddha *(1990), was reviewed in the first part of this Special Issue (April 1994).*

Flying Out of the Sky

A little green parrot
Flying out of the sky
(As if out of the sky
A green shoot had sprouted)
Went and sat in a tree
It was a very green and leafy tree.
Then I could no more see the parrot
What I saw for long was the leafy
green tree.

VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA
Translated by Harish Trivedi

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To Look at a Beautiful Girl

To look at a beautiful girl
Is to look at beauty as beautiful

Many looked at
That beautiful girl by herself
As she came in as she went out

She'll go away
She's perhaps gone
Indeed she's gone away

Those who had a look at her
Are those who have looked at her

VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA
Translated by Harish Trivedi

way the sweetness and pathos of mother-son, father-daughter, brother-sister and husband-wife relationships emerge in Shukla's poems. In fact, only about a dozen of these 75 poems are about domesticity. One is familiar with images of domesticity not only in Shukla's poems but also in his novel *Naukar ki Kamiz* (The Servant's Shirt) and his short stories. He presents the everyday activity of coming home, going out and again returning home with such sensitivity and with a necessary tension so as to open several windows on to social, bodily and spiritual reality via this experience. His way of looking at things is unique and original and he fashions a language of his own to convey it, which may be called Vinod Kumar Shukla's idiom.

This idiom appears extremely simple and transparent, free from unnecessary verbiage, except that this simplicity is many-layered, and behind it is a complete control and mastery of language. If he has been recognised for his use of language, it is because he has established a special relationship with the tradition of the language. This is so even though we may not be able to compare his language with that of any other writer or poet. Nor is he among those writers who write or talk about their creative struggle, their art or their process of composition. He is among those whose struggles are to be found only in the compositions themselves. He has a complete grasp over the power of his composition, so there is no possibility of its slipping. In this sense, he is a writer without precedent.

The special kind of tension inherent in his compositions is also an indicator of this. We are often surprised by the immaculate way in which things come before us in his writing. This purity of composition and of language would not be possible without his strength of experience and of composition. He does not lament the corruption of language in the Hindi-speaking society, nor does he appear intimidated by the impact of the electronic media or political vocabulary on Hindi. The language he creates in his poems includes in itself the struggle to preserve the language. He wages this struggle on his own terms, by which I do not mean that he is untouched by events around him.

After the collection *Voh Admi Chala Gaya Naya Garam Coat Pahankar Vichar ki Tarah* (The Man Went Away Wearing a New Warm Coat Like a Thought), the present collection is Hindi poetry's next new attainment, for the reason that he has not lost faith in poetry, in the power of language or in human expressive power. If Vinod Kumar Shukla's poems endow us with hope, confidence and human truth, we may well term them a great fight in "this troublesome existence" and in today's difficult times.

One more point. The idiom which Vinod Kumar Shukla has so consummately achieved also takes him toward a condensation from which another journey may now begin for him. Because it is not possible for a writer like him to remain constrained by any sort of condensation. One example of such condensation is the 20 page poem "Shararatan mainey mudkar dekha ek ped ko" (Mischievously I turned and looked back at a tree) in this collection. This is his longest poem to date, but it is a poem which excites envy by its unbroken monotoned pace, speech and linguistic construction.

Prayag Shukla works for the Navabharat Times *. He is an eminent poet himself and is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.*

Translated by Ruth Vanita

First published in Hindi in *Navbharat Times*.

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POET OF LIVING MEMORIES

J.M. Parakh

YEH JO HARA HAI

By Prayag Shukla

Vagdevi Prakashan, Bikaner, 1990, pp. 80, Rs. 40.00

BEETE KITNE BARAS

By Prayag Shukla

Vaani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 72, Rs. 40.00

Prayag Shukla is a poet who arose in the 1970s. This was the period in which the Modernist stream of *nai kavita* (new poetry) was fading into *akavita* (non-poetry). *Akavita*, representative of a negative worldview, offered a picture of reality that had in it the distortions and decay of life, the poet's impotent rage and verbal aggression, but not the positive side of life. It lacked that simple beauty which would awaken faith in life. It presented only one side of life, and that too in a fragmentary and self-obsessed way. In the din surrounding *akavita*, the voice of progressive poetry had also been somewhat suppressed. But that period also saw some poets who refused to drift along with the current trends in poetry, and who forged their own way, but without self-advertisement. Following their own separate path, they did not turn their back on life's beautiful truths. Prayag Shukla was one such poet.

Prayag Shukla has published six collections of poems so far. The first, *Kavita Sambhav* (The Birth of Poetry) was published in 1968. This was followed by *Yeh Ek Din Hai* (This is a Day), *Raat Ka Per* (Tree of Night), *Adhoori Cheezen Tamam* (Many Things Unfinished), *Yeh Jo Hara Hai* (This That is Green) and *Beete Kitne Baras* (So Many Years Gone By). Of the two collections under review, *Yeh Jo Hara Hai* was published in 1990 and *Beete Kitne Baras* in 1992; both contain poems written after 1987. Prayag is not just a poet, he is a story-writer and art critic as well. He has published to date four collections of stories and one novel *Gathari* (Bundle) and another novel is soon to be published.

Right from the start Prayag Shukla has been a poet of certain distinctive images and experiences and truths regarding life. His language has a flavour all its own which can be discerned from his very first anthology of poems. Life and poetry are not separate for Prayag Shukla. What there is in life is there in his poetry as well. Nevertheless, he selects experiences in keeping with his interest, his *samskara* and world-view, and transforms them into poetry. The material world enters Prayag's writing in its totality. Nature in it is not separated from the human, far from being in opposition to it:

Look, look
In the veins of the tree too is flowing
That tale
Which at this moment
Is in your thoughts.
Per (*Tree*) *in* Yeh Jo Hara Hai

This intimacy of the poet with the material world is the key to understanding his poetic vision. There is also a kind of continuity in this relationship, which has been changing with changes in the material world, but the feeling of intimacy is never lost sight of. The different manifestations of nature that repeatedly enter his poetry are accompanied by an entire image-cluster, a collage, and each collage is distinct from the other. Thus, the recurring bird or tree or sunshine on darkness of night become parts of different experiences, and create very different effects.

Yes or No?

Have you within you
Trees with nests?
Have you greenery?
Deserts awaiting rain?

Have you an ocean?
A boat bearing people
along the current?

A village
for homecoming?

A female face
flashing from time to time?
Laughing children?
Mountains?
Flights of birds?

A sky
of many hues?
A darkness
guessing at mysteries?

Have you within you
or not?

PRAYAG SHUKLA
Translated by Harish Trivedi

In Prayag Shukla's writing, the variegated world of image-clusters exists in the form of living memories. With these are intertwined the poet's sensitivity and vision. There memories articulate the continuity and fluidity of life. Several poems such as "Pita Ki Tasveer Ki Tereh" (Like Father's Portrait), "Group Photo," "Kayee Baras Pehle" (Many Years Ago), "Purani Kameez" (Old Shirt), "Ek Pahari Raste Par Akele" (Alone on a Mountain Trail) are poignant expressions of precisely such living memories. Prayag Shukla's poems bear witness to the fact that he does not resurrect the dead ghosts of the past in his poetry. In memories also is found that which, though a part of it has been consigned to the past, maintains its continuity into the present:

Look, I have reached the age
Which Father is in his portrait.
Eyebrows somewhat drawn, hair
somewhat grey
Even the way the shoulder-bag is slung
Is the same, which is not there in the
portrait
But which this portrait recalls.

In *Yeh Jo Hara Hai*, the poet presents not just memories but every moment and every experience in a way that suggests that his world is being snatched away from him, that he is bidding farewell to it all. Could this be the influence of age? "Fear of death!/Fear of half-done tasks/ Being left undone."

Since the tone of Prayag Shukla's poetry tends to be low and full of intimacy, a misconception arises that there is no place in it for social concerns. The truth is that even the poet's nature-related poems are not pure nature poetry, and in them too can be felt the pulsations of human life:

As if oblivious of all
I woke up in the morning.
Oblivious of me
Flew a bird
Piercing the sky

Or

Evening sets in.
Trees are about to sink into the dark,
The outlines of buildings.
The birds wish to fly home.
There is a silence here.
Empty lie the garden-chairs.
There comes from houses
A medley of sounds.

In both the extracts, nature is not isolated, human life is present as well. What is significant is that the picture of nature emerging in the poet's mind is not merely a visual image, the poet's sensibility too can be glimpsed through it. In his poetry

Prayag creates various images of morning, afternoon, evening, night and the dense dark of midnight and never does so from a position of indifference to life. That is why in poems like *"Hotel ke Kamre Mein Raat Ko"* (In a Hotel Room at Night), *"Sham ki Lali"* (Red of the Evening Sky), *"Khirki Se Per"* (Tree from Window), *"Dopeher Ko Ek Stree"* 'A Woman in the Afternoon), *"Jharee"* (Rain-shower), *"Suryast Se Pehle"* (Before Sunset), *"Varsha Chitra"* (Picture of Rain), *"Ghanee Rat"* (Have Seen), *"Mahanagar Mein Prakriti Kavita"* (Nature Poem in the Metropolis) nature and life are so intermingled that they cannot be told apart.

The poet's perspective on life is very uncomplicated. He views himself in the context of the vastness of creation, finding not only himself but the distances and differences that have cropped up amongst human beings to be very small. But this does not result in his getting entangled in any mystical arguments, all he desires is that people place themselves in the context of the vastness and continuity of creation and realise that a relationship of intimacy between human beings and between the human being and nature is the only natural and easy one. That is why he is opposed to that 'frenzy' which creates divisions between human beings and between the human being and nature (*"Unmad ke Khilaf Ek Kavita"*, A Poem Against Frenzy). Prayag holds that human beings are related to each other at a level of intimacy quite apart from that of formal introductions (*"Do Admi"*, Two Men). And there is a deep attachment to life, an attachment to all such things without which human life is meaningless (*"Prem,"*, Love). The desire to keep the humanity within him alive under all circumstances is what makes his poetry so meaningful:

May I perceive every anxiety
Present in the air
Within the drops of dew
And outside.

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It is precisely this wish that links the poet to those who have been deprived of the true joy and beauty of life. It is true that Prayag lacks the courage of Muktibodh and Raghuvir Sahay to venture poetically on life's more intricate pathways, but he also does not sidestep anything that is encountered on the road of life. That is why "boy sorting rubbish" or "Woman wiping brow/With a torn saree" enter his poems so effortlessly. His poetic vision increasingly comes to rest upon those things in which the paradoxes surrounding us are more clearly articulated:

The children have gone to sleep
The cricket-playing ones
The ones who ride tricycles
Have gone to sleep

The children are awake
Washing plates and saucers
Carrying loads
They are awake.
"Jag Rahe Hain" from Yeh Jo Hara Hai

It is probably due to a deep attachment to life that the poet can take the most ordinary of experiences, work it into a seemingly ordinary image and yet render it extraordinary at the level of feeling. For, Prayag Shukla neither terrorises with language nor does he shock through verbal pyrotechnics. Even during the latter phase of *nai kavita*, when images were replaced by statements, Prayag brought in images and retained an intimacy with life. It is the very ease and intimacy in the ordinariness of Prayag Shukla's writing that, without terrorising or astonishing readers, encloses them within itself.

Prayag always has living images before him, images that speak for themselves, that fully contain their vision, that do not need elucidation, requiring only to be felt with ease and intimacy. Prayag knows what is beautiful and what is not beautiful. He also knows what is unjust and with great ease introduces it into his poetry. But beyond this, instead of any political statement, he points with a deep faith towards the future:

Somewhere deep
In the soil
A seed, a pregnant stone,
Turning, writhing
Raises its head.
"Beej" (Seed), from Beete Kitne Baras

It is this very faith that makes Prayag Shukla's poems relevant and necessary even today, poems without which contemporary Hindi poetry is incomplete, which have made Hindi poetry more productive, humane and meaningful.

J.M. Parakh is Reader in Hindi at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. His works include a study of the ideological background of Modern Hindi Poetry.

Translated by Maya Joshi.

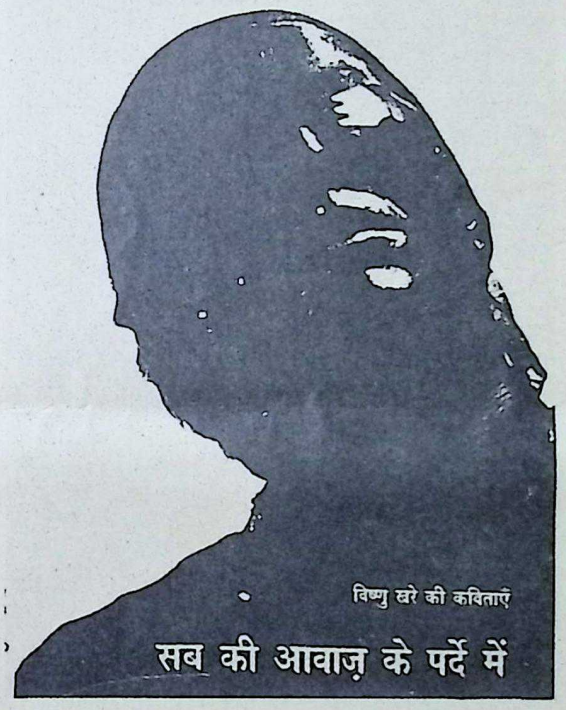
Hidden Behind All the Voices is a Poet

Lothar Lutze

SAB KI AAVAAZ KE PARDE MEN

By Vishnu Khare

Radhakrishna Prakashan, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 119, Rs. 90.00



It was about time. "Vishnu Khare? Talks big, writes little" is only one of the unfriendly characterizations the poet has frequently been exposed to. Not that he had not done "his level best" to provoke them. After the publication of his first collection, *Khud apni aankh se* (With my own eyes), in 1978, Vishnu Khare, arrogantly careless, has been scattering some poems of his in various papers, journals, and anthologies; now, at last, after an interval of sixteen years, he has come out with his second collection, *Sab ki aavaaz ke parde men* (Hidden behind all the voices). The title is significant. It is part of a *sher* by Mir Taqi Mir, which, in the original script, is quoted in the book: "Gosh ko hosh ke tuk khol ke sun shore-e-jahan/Sab ki aavaaz ke parde men sukhansaaz hai ek" (Open your inner ear a little and listen, O din of the world/Hidden behind all the voices is a poet.)

This indicates, first of all, this Hindi poet's openness to the sister language, Urdu, and his linguistic openness in general, which would include English as well. His approach to his poetic medium is anything but puristic (—a German of my generation cannot but associate linguistic purism with his country's National Socialist past). Like Martin Luther in 16th century Germany, Vishnu Khare "keeps an eye on people's mouths" (in accordance with the title of the 1978 collection), or he opens his other sense-organ, his ear, the poet's "inner ear" of his new collection to "listen to the din of the world" of which the common man's speech is a part. And, again and again in this volume, the miracle happens: with his poetic craftsmanship, he succeeds, most of the time, in converting everyday language into poetry—Prospero's magic wand comes to one's mind. After *Sab ki aavaaz ke parde men*, the concept of poeticity in contemporary Hindi poetry will have to be thought over anew.

This applies as much to the subject-matter one encounters in the book. "Laalten jalaanaa" (Lighting a lantern, pp. 52-55), one of the longest poems in the collection, would sound like one of the obligatory instructions provided with gadgets of all kinds, were it not for the human presence—that of the family members—from the very beginning; and as the poem proceeds and approaches its end, a very trite, very ordinary activity has grown into a ritual, secularly religious, performed in order to preserve something extremely rare and precious, something about to be lost. And this effect has been achieved without a change of tone, without even a hint of nostalgia, let alone of sentimentality:

Therefore good lighters of lamps
Place the lamp within their reach but where
It can't be overturned or extinguished
And they turn down the wick not beyond the point
Where its flame like the sun rising in the morning
Starts looking red and cheerful.

With the publication of *Sab ki aavaaz ke parde men*, contemporary Hindi poetry has become unimaginable without Vishnu Khare's contribution to it. This applies, in particular, to a variety of his poems which, to German readers and audiences, has been introduced as 'Erzahlgedichte', narrative poems. Such poems can be located somewhere between poetry and narrative prose, they are pieces of what may be called prose poetry (an inversion of the established concept of poetic prose), which is characteristic of his manner of writing. In his constant occupation with the everyday life of common people, with death, with himself and his family, along with occasional excursions into politics, the poet has succeeded in creating his own unmistakable tone, which, with few exceptions, moves somewhere between chat and reportage, here and there seems to become obsessed with the pedantry of office Hindi and, while experimenting, produces unexpected possibilities of lyrical beauty. The extremely delicate and vulnerable core of these poems is enclosed, almost shamefacedly so, in a hard linguistic shell consisting of sometimes unwieldy grammatical constructions (often in the passive voice), conventional idioms and flourishes, of linguistic retractions and—last but not least—of self-irony:

You've kept harping a lot on Chhindwada
In your memories Vishnu Khare
You've capitalized too much
On the colours smells and sounds of Madhya Pradesh
Acted out profusely
Your ties with the earth
Have been dreaming all the time
Of Chhindwada's Pataleshwar and Chhota Bazaar
Have considered Chhindwada your patrimony
Open your eyes, idiot, and see who has been elected from Chhindwada time and again.

From "Mitti" (Earth)

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It does not appear to be presumptuous to assume that this poetry quite faithfully mirrors its maker's personality. At the same time, it is as obvious that, judged by the standards of traditional poetics, most if not all of the poems in the present collection would have to be declared 'unpoetic'. But whenever Vishnu Khare distrusts his own special poetic possibilities and resorts to conventional techniques (e.g., with the extravagant use of adjectives and imagery), that special Khare sound is usually lost and, as a consequence, the reader (or listener) feels let down. Because of such a temporary lack of self-confidence—which occurs seldom enough—"Single Wicket Series" (pp. 95-96), having all the ingredients for becoming a great poem, remains merely a good one.

Apart from smaller groupings such as the bird poems (pp. 26-31) or the cricket poems (pp. 91-96), the bulk of the poems in *Sab ki aavaaz ke parde men* could easily be arranged, and has partly been by the poet, in three major thematic groups: (1) 'personal' poems (for a long time, he has been talking about writing an autobiography in verse: the poems in this group may well be read as pieces of an autobiographic mosaic), (2) the mythological poems, in which the poet treats characters taken from Indian mythology (usually his favourite epic, the *Mahabharata*) as if they were next-door neighbours and belonged to the lower middle-class. In "Draupadi ke vishay men Krishna" (Krishna on Draupadi, pp. 20-21), he makes Krishna say:

The legitimate queens even whose names
I cannot quite recall
Who are not even middle-aged any more
now
I have entrusted them to my aged friend
Your now impotent husband Arjun

Arjun as an old man beyond good and evil, harmless enough to look after a bunch of elderly women without jeopardizing anybody's reputation: some readers may consider this idea sacrilegious—as if the poet here were not just doing his job: imagining the world (including its mythology) in all its aspects, down to its minutest details, and to its bitter end.

Finally, there is (3) the group of poems dealing with the common man (*aam aadmi*), with various protagonists from the semi-urbanized lower middle-class. It is they and their unheroic everyday struggle for survival to whom all the poet's sympathy belongs. They are the people who are bearing the brunt of the modernization process on the South Asian sub-continent: people who have been uprooted, have severed their connections with rural traditions without having been able to gain a foothold in the new urban environment. They are the people on the move, "who change their residence in a tempo" ("Jo tempo men ghar badalte hain", pp. 108-111: one of the 'plural poems' with which one associates Vishnu Khare ever since "Dhaabe men der se aanevaale log". The reader cannot, by the way, fail to enjoy the pun in the reference to the notoriously known three-wheeled vehicle).

Of course, there are enough gradual distinctions between the individual representatives of this class. Take "*Gahak*" (The Customer, pp. 22-23): the poem lives on the microscopic observation and presentation of such subtle differences:

He had already circled around it twice
The third time he entered. The shop was
empty
Only a five-year-old beaming child was
sitting
On a chair before the mirror while from
a long bench his father
Was keeping one eye on his scooter loaf of
bread and laundry
And the other on a three-month-old num-
ber of Filmfare.

Quite different from the child's father, whom the poet has furnished with typical lower-middle-class status symbols (the scooter, the loaf of bread, the laundry, the film journal), the Customer enters the 'saloon' without a word, carrying a bag, dressed in a torn *pajaamaa*. The barber, who a few seconds ago was joking with the child of the gentleman on the bench, turns to him abruptly and addresses him impersonally or in the imperative, and the newcomer does not dare to sit beside the scooter-owner, not even on the vacant chair which has finally been allotted to him. He does not take notice of the surrounding looking-glass world of consumption and luxury (which for him includes the miracle-performing Saain Baba) and ignores the politics of the day: the calendar with the slogans of the mighty. Instead, all his attention is focused on his bag, which, "perhaps", contains some items of minimal survival: onions, flour, tools. At the end of the poem we are told, in an artistic climax, that even these are threatened: the onions will soon be beyond his means, the flour too will have gone up, the tools will have got rusty.

The writer of these lines must confess that he cannot easily get rid of the Customer: He haunts him, follows him obstinately, like a shadow; a great spoil-sport. He pursues him in his pursuits (especially the indological ones)—in short, the poet has succeeded in creating a social prototype that is going to stay with us. What more can poetry achieve?

A good, an important collection: well bowled, sir.

Single Wicket Series

I have just taken guard again
Have checked if my boots pads gloves helmet are securely fastened
Have just patted level the pitch in front with bat
A trifle confident a trifle anxious
I have been beaten once or twice so far
But I await the next ball to come.

From the four light towers shine hundreds of lights in the stadium
Multiplying by four the shadow of each object
Amidst the four-fold shadows of a crossed out mark
I too stand as my own shadow, a fifth
There's a strange stillness in the stands
What moment is this when everyone holds his breath

Suddenly he appears from the other end
Like a horse-rider but loping as a moon-walker
In some dark outfit as if with a cape streaming behind
He bowls with a jerk of the head
His grip flashing for a moment
The lines of his jaws and temple now picked out
Eyes sunken so that all one sees are black holes
His teeth had flashed once, it's as if I have seen him once before
Who is this cloaked figure I've never faced before

But my feet turned to lead
My bat to stone
My heart and hands grew cold my lips parched to flakes
Behind my feet and on my ribcage I heard
That familiar rattle
As when on the wind pushing open the lab door
A skeleton knocks against the wall.

Who has suddenly switched off all the lights
Why have all the spectators gone mute
Is this just the wind howling through the stadium
How have I come out of my own petrified shock
As if I had been released of my whole armour
By now he has come floating through the air near me
I feel on my shoulder
His consoling but firm and insistent hand
Now making out his features still in the dark I say
Well bowled sir!
The pitch the gone out lights the dark stadium
All seem to descend to some lower level meanwhile
He then tosses the ball to me and I back to him
And so we gradually fade away from sight
For some other round of single wicket somewhere else.

VISHNU KHARE
Translated by Harish Trivedi

Lothar Lutze, Professor of Modern Indian Languages in the South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg, is the resident representative of that university in India. He is a prolific translator of Indian poetry into German, and the author of Hindi Writing in Post-Colonial India *(1985).*

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A Necessary Play

Shahid Anwar

JIS LAHORE NAHIN DEKHYA WO JANMYA HI NAHIN*

by Asghar Wajahat

Dinman Prakashan, Delhi, 1991, pp. 88, Rs. 35.00

Habib Tanvir is one of the most highly respected names of the Indian stage. His reputation is based not only on his art of direction but on the social purposiveness of that art. It is natural then that high expectations were aroused when the Repertory Company of the Shri Ram Centre in New Delhi entrusted him with the direction of the first production of an especially relevant play such as *Jis Lahore Nahi Dekhya Wo Janmya hi Nahin* (He Who Hasn't Seen Lahore Isn't Even Born).

Asghar Wajahat, the Hindi-Urdu writer probably best known for the TV serial "Boond-Boond", has put at centre of this play some positive aspects of religion as well as the exploitation of religion for selfish ends. The current climate of opinion arising out of Hindu-Muslim communalism is seen to be so intimately related to the Partition of the country that it seems hardly possible today to criticize such communalism without going back to explicate that tragedy. It needs to be stated time and again that the creation of Pakistan and the flight of millions of refugees from one side to the other was not only a historical event but also a human tragedy. It was a displacement merely of the body and not of the soul. The play *Jis Lahore* underlines just how political ruthlessness can turn into human ruthlessness.

In the play, Sikandar Mirza and his family uproot themselves from Lucknow to arrive in the newly created state of Pakistan. After they have spent many months in a refugee camp in Lahore, they are finally given a 22-room *haveli* for their new home. It had belonged to Ratanlal Jauhri, who had set out one day to look for some Hindu *tonga*-wallah to help them set off on a journey out of Pakistan—and had never returned home. Sikandar Mirza heaves a big sigh of relief when he's allotted the haveli but his joy is short-lived. For, suddenly, the old mother of Ratanlal emerges out of a room in the haveli and asks him who he is and what he's doing in her son's house.

Sikandar and his family do their best to bring home to the old woman that she and her son no longer own the haveli, because Lahore is now in Pakistan and Pakistan has been created solely for the Muslims. They tell Mai (i.e., Mother, as she is universally called) that it would be in her best interest quietly to steal away to India to be amongst people of her own community. But the old woman couldn't care less about Hindustan and Pakistan. All she knows is that the haveli belongs to her son, and she isn't going to budge.

When Sikandar Mirza seeks redress from the office of the Custodian, the corrupt functionaries there exploit the situation by suggesting that he may now be dispossessed of the haveli altogether, and extract a bribe every month to let him stay on. Sikandar Mirza keeps pleading and protesting that he is a Muslim, but soon grows disillusioned about all Muslims being equal and equally safe in a Pakistan created in their name. In desperation he turns to Yaqub Khan, a notorious *goonda*, so that the old Mai may be removed from his path for good.

Meanwhile, however, natural human affections have taken their own course and Mai has become virtually a member of Sikandar's family. So close has this relationship grown that when Diwali comes round, Sikandar despite being a Muslim helps Mai celebrate it according to custom and ritual. For Yaqub Khan, however, it is intolerable that a *kafir* woman should carry on openly as a Hindu. He threatens Sikandar Mirza for harbouring her, but Sikandar stands unmoved as he has the support now not only of his own family but also of some other characters such as Nasir, Aleem, and the liberal and enlightened Maulvi Saheb. When Mai dies, the Maulvi rules that it would be the right thing to cremate rather than bury her, and she is given a full Hindu funeral. For this, the Maulvi is brutally murdered in the final scene, stabbed repeatedly as he gets up from reading the Koran.

The effective theatricality already present in the play was exploited to the utmost by the director. Though singular enough in their thought and beliefs, the characters remained familiar and convincing in terms of their experience and conduct. Particularly effective were the quotations by the Maulvi from the Koran and the *hadis* in favour of religious tolerance. This was especially apt as, to the community in our society which is most in need of being educated in anti-communalism, it is almost impossible to advocate any kind of progressivism which negates religion.

The character of Nasir Kazmi seemed superfluous to the plot. Nasir is a respected poet of Pakistan, but his presence in the play had very little to do with its basic message. On the other hand, his bursting into verse now and then seemed often crude and proved an impediment to the natural flow of action in the play. If Asghar Wajahat intended this character to be the representative of his own ideas in the play, he needn't have bothered, for the experiential world of the other characters here was quite sufficient for his purpose.

After *Dushman* and *Moteram ka Satyagraha*, *Jis Lahore* now is a further indication that Habib Tanvir is in quest of some kind of a happy medium between plays meant for the stage and street theatre. The use of quick repartee in dialogue, a generous sprinkling of wit and humour, and an interspersing of songs are all evidence of it. But of the many *ghazals* sung throughout the play, though a couple may have been pleasant to listen to in their own right, hardly any bore a perceptible correlation with the theme or the message of the play.

That a man should act in the role of a woman and an old woman at that may seem strange, but the tremendous performance of Girish Bhai as the old Mai amply demonstrated that for an artiste, what matters ultimately is a challenging role. Jafar Ganjari as Aleem was effective, but hardly any other members of the cast were the master of their timing or expressions and gestures.

Despite some shortcomings of production, *Jis Lahore* is an indispensable play, a play so necessary that it should be shown in every locality, every lane and every street-corner. It gains in relevance particularly in the context of the communal polarization caused by the Babri Masjid-Rama Janmabhoomi controversy. (The play was first staged two years before the demolition—Ed.) As the kind of people this play should be targetted at are not such as usually come to watch a serious play, it is the play which should go out and reach them as and where it can.

First staged at the Shri Ram Centre, New Delhi, on 26-28 September 1990; directed by Habib Tanvir.

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Translated by Harish Trivedi.

First published in Hindi in *Jansatta*.

Epic Mythology and Hindi Drama

Kirti Jain

HASTINAPUR
in
GHULAM BADSHAH: DO NATAK
(TWO PLAYS)

By Nand Kishore Acharya

Vagdevi Prakashan, Bikaner, 1992, pp. 112, Rs. 75.00

While recently watching a production of the Hindi play *Hastinapur* by Nand Kishore Acharya, several questions came to mind, about the notion of taking the epics as a base for contemporary dramatic expression. Why do creative artists need to use epic mythology for self-expression? How has it been dealt with in dramatic texts at different periods? And how successfully does this particular play employ the epic narrative to create a richer theatrical experience?

It is interesting to note that in the post-independence period, and particularly in the recent past, there have been more plays in Hindi based on epic mythology than in any other Indian language—and these too mostly inspired by the *Mahabharat*. It is very difficult to pinpoint the reason for such a preoccupation with the epics but one can venture a guess. Modern Hindi theatre, as is known to all, has not had any well-established or continuous tradition of theatre, and therefore the exposure to plays and performances is that much less. A play, which finds its expression through actors, demands a specific understanding of its technique as different from other modes of literary expression. Without much exposure to theatre it is extremely difficult to grasp these requirements of structuring a play. The Hindi playwright therefore is forced to write practically in a theatrical vacuum. He therefore finds it easier to take up a known narrative which provides a basic structure—which he can then break according to his ideas and create his own superstructure. He might find it more difficult to directly confront day-to-day issues and create a completely new dramatic structure on his own.

On the other hand, the reason for taking up the epics for exploration and making a contemporary comment may not be a negative one at all. The Hindi theatre, not being dependent on an audience for its survival, is known for greater experimentation, greater intellectual

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aliveness and for dealing with wider issues. A new look at the epics certainly challenges the intellect much more and allows for transcending the narrower everyday issues—and therefore could be another reason for the Hindi playwright being attracted by the epics. One could also say that the entire Hindi belt, which has been highly politicized in the last fifty years, finds greater identification in the intrigue and the power game that dominate the *Mahabharat*.

Some of the significant Hindi plays based on the epics that come to mind are Dharmvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*, Shankar Shesh's *Komal Gandhar*, Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* and among the more recent ones, Doodhnath Singh's *Yamgatha*, Subhanshu Vaibhav's *Maharathi* and Nand Kishore Acharya's *Dehantar* and now *Hastinapur*.

Nand Kishore Acharya, a poet, critic and scholar, has written several plays, all of which show tremendous theatrical potential. The playwright, in different plays, deals with history, mythology and topical issues with a keen contemporary sensibility and is always able to give a fresh perspective to a known subject. His play *Hastinapur* places Vidura's mother Shubha centre-stage and scrutinizes the actions, intentions and attitudes of the Kauravas from her point of view. Her bitterness and anger is directed against Bhishma, who she thinks is not only responsible for the war but also immense suffering for several generations of women. She accuses him of becoming a prisoner of his self-image of one who keeps his vow and has sacrificed all for the good of others, and in the process justifies actions which ultimately result in a total destruction of a whole lineage.

The play raises some important questions through Shubha. Why is it that all the Kurus decided to accompany Dhritrashtra and Gandhari to the forest after the war? Is it because the Pandavas were not accepted as true Kurus? Is that the reason why Bhishma decided to be on the side of the Kauravas—and remained so till the end? Or did Bhishma have a soft corner for Ambika and her son Dhritrashtra due to which he sided with the Kauravas? Why was Vidur, the fittest of the three brothers, not accepted as a Kuruvanshi and not made the King even though his father was the same as that of Dhritrashtra? Why did Bhishma not take a stand or leave when Duryodhan was being unjust to the Pandavas? Was Bhishma responsible for the war due to his insistence on keeping his vow despite changed circumstances? Is a woman mere 'property' that she can be won in a battle and then handed over to somebody else—even against her wishes—as Bhishma did to Ambika and Ambalika? Were the blind and ailing sons Dhritrashtra and Pandu, the consequence of unwilling consummation forced upon Ambika and Ambalika, the responsibility of Bhishma? Was it Bhishma's desire to retain control and power through the blind king that motivated him to deny Vidur the kingship even though he too was Vyasa's son?

These and many other pertinent and interesting questions are brought up in the play. In fact the play has very little action—it is a play of ideas, of debate. Here the debate is initiated by Shubha, a character who has found very little place in the epic but whom the playwright has created through his imagination. We see her mostly as a narrator in the play where her pointed arguments against the Kuruvanshis in general and Bhishma in particular sustain the interest in the narrative. But the play does not rise beyond a debate because even when we see Shubha as a character—once she is engaged in yet another conceptual debate with Bhishma and Satyavati regarding the right of Vidur to be king and another time when she is substituting for Ambika, her mistress, to meet Vyasa—she is too placid and one-dimensional to become real as a woman. We therefore see her only as a device to put forward the questions of the playwright.

In fact most characters seem to be making an entry merely to act out the debate; nobody seems to be living out the momentous conflicts that the play talks about. Even Bhishma, for whom there could have been immense scope in the action of the play, does not come out as a real living human being. He who made the extreme sacrifice for the sake of his father, who is debarred (through his own vow) from experiencing love and its consummation, who is destined not to ever be in the seat of power though he is the fittest person for it, who is loved by Ambika but has to plead with her to spend a night with Vyasa—what immense scope for a rounded character in such a play! But none of this is exploited. Nor is Satyawati's or Kunti's quiet suffering brought upfront. What we do have in terms of dramatic action is Ambika living out her trauma when she is forced for *niyoga* with Vyasa. Since that is the only dramatic moment in the play, the forced *niyoga* gets underlined in a way that all the other important issues and questions recede into the background, to the detriment of the play. Structurally too, it proceeds in a linear fashion. The device of flashbacks is not too imaginatively used, as it does not provide an extra dimension to the debate but merely illustrates it.

While there are innumerable unexplored areas that our epics can still provide, and therefore there is scope for many more plays of this kind, this now needs utmost caution. It already appears that such plays centering around one character or one situation from the epic are falling into a set pattern, a formula of sorts, thus becoming somewhat predictable.

Though the language of the play is crisp and pointed and therefore sharpens the bitterness that is present in Shubha's arguments, yet often in the keenness to put forward the argument in all its force the limits of the character are forgotten. In moments when Shubha speaks to Bhishma about Vidur's right to the throne, or when Ambika argues with Satyavati regarding the impropriety of forcing *niyoga* on her despite her unwillingness, the language of these characters suddenly loses all connection with their relationships and becomes very false. This happens probably because the play does not seem to be really an exploration of these relationships but a thesis sought to be presented through a dramatic form—where there is bound to be an imposition of ideas by the playwright, which often may not be in keeping with the characters in the play.

In fact, amongst the Hindi plays written in this mode Dharmavir Bharti's *Andha Yug* stands out for its innovative structure, theatrical language and a strong comment while retaining the complexity and intensity of the original epic. Some of the other plays mentioned earlier including a play by Nand Kishore Acharya himself tend to explore the rich inner life of characters involved in some of the ancilliary stories in the *Mahabharat* and have succeeded in providing a new perspective and a meaningful dramatic experience.

While there are innumerable unexplored areas that our epics can still provide, and therefore there is scope for many more plays of this kind, this now needs utmost caution. It already appears that such plays centering around one character or one situation from the epic are falling into a set pattern, a formula of sorts, thus becoming somewhat predictable. There is a danger that most playwrights pick up their plots and themes from the epics as an easy way out. In such a case no meaningful exploration or widening of perception is possible.

It might be worthwhile to keep in mind that while 'going to the roots' is essential, particularly in the case of modern theatre which got uprooted somewhere midway, some recent attempts at relating to traditional forms, particularly at the level of dramatic form, misfired because the entire exercise was reduced to a formula, of borrowing the externals. Most plays did not even attempt to widen the theatrical vocabulary by reaching out to the basic concepts behind the forms. This, of course, is not yet the case in relation to themes and ideas drawn from the epics—but it can soon become that, and therefore the note of caution.

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Drama of the Rebellious Subaltern

Satyendra Kumar Taneja

COURT MARTIAL

By Swadesh Deepak

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 96, Rs. 50.00

The increasing ascendance of the Hindi stage and all its gratifying achievements begin to look rather less impressive and encouraging when seen from the point of the view of the Hindi dramatist. He has been a figure constantly neglected, and it is in this context that the successful and effective production of *Court Martial* by Swadesh Deepak has its value. Unlike many other successes of the Hindi stage, this was a play originally written in Hindi, and it also won an award from the Sahitya Kala Parishad.

Though this play raises again the familiar problem of untouchability, it is a sharp delineation of its manifestation and working in the new context of the Indian army, through which the playwright exposes the tensions emerging in our society. Swadesh Deepak's creativity and social concerns are revealed particularly in the way in which the contradictions inherent in this problem are exposed in the setting of a section of our society which seems shaped and disciplined by the highest of our nationalist ideals as enshrined in our Constitution.

Ramchander is a *sowar* or a cavalry man—fair, attractive, faithful, honest and devoted to duty, and so quiet and courteous in conduct that there's never been a complaint against him. He is also a rising athlete who has just defeated Captain Kapoor in the 5,000 metres race. Stung by his humiliation by a man of lower caste and class, Captain Kapoor manages to have Ramchander posted under him, ostensibly so as to facilitate his training. Now begins Ramchander's torture and agony. He is constantly insulted and needled. He is declared to be not only an untouchable but also a bastard, for how could he be so fair and attractive to look at unless his mother had gone and slept with some Kapoor or Varma! Thus provoked and agitated in the extreme,

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Ramchander one day shoots point blank at Captain Kapoor and his friend Captain Varma. Varma dies instantly, Kapoor survives, a court martial is held, and Ramchander is sentenced to death, but not before the counsel for the defence Bikash Roy has exposed fully the aberration and the perversity of Kapoor's conduct. Disgraced in public and full of self-reproach, Kapoor commits suicide.

In Swadesh Deepak's treatment, this is a play centring not on murder but on the causes, the circumstances and the tensions leading up to the murder. In focus is the whole crisis of values and ideals following our independence. Though the main issue in *Court Martial* is apparently caste, Deepak has given it a larger social, economic and moral context. The clash between the lower and the upper classes is the more ironically pointed here for being staged on a playfield. Such is the cruelty of the members of the "ruling class" here like Kapoor and Varma and Gupta as soon as their dominance and status is threatened even in play that they begin to taunt and torture the meek and "cow-like" Ramchander to the point of utter brutalization. Ramchander's act, thus, is not attack but counter-attack, not murder but a revenge murder.

Alive to his purpose, the playwright polarizes the issues through the apt device of the court-room scenes. So presented, the pros and cons could hardly be any sharper. Though it is Ramchander who is in the dock, it is a tribute to the artistic effectiveness of the playwright that the reader/spectator is made to question who really the killer is, and whether Kapoor shouldn't be in the dock instead.

The characters in *Court Martial* are more types than individuals, except that as the play progresses we are made to see that the so-called goodies are in fact the baddies and the baddies the goodies. The one character who leads us to this realization above all others is the protagonist, the defence counsel Bikash Roy. He is given significant antecedents: his father is a judge of the High Court and he has a brother who is a Naxalite. He is evidently the playwright's spokesman, and what he says often sounds more like speech than dialogue. The special emphasis laid on him also creates an imbalance between him and the other characters.

Though the play is cast essentially in the realistic mould, it also has many theatrical innovations. Parallel to the dialogue runs a whole series of non-verbal acts of communication, of stage "business". This is at its most effective in the scenes in which Bikash Roy weaves a web round Kapoor through his movements, gestures and facial expressions. It is through this silent entrapment that Kapoor is driven to suicide. Altogether, Swadesh Deepak here shows a fine understanding of stagecraft.

Even before it was published, this play was staged at the festival of prize-winning original plays in Hindi held by the Sahitya Kala Parishad. The director Ranjit Kapoor, famous for his skill at mounting plays of this kind, made his own distinctive contribution by making the script tighter and the characterization sharper in this already "well-made" play. His production underlined the sharp oppositions in this play which make for its eminent stageworthiness.

In its sharply polarized presentation of a socially significant theme, its direct and effective exploitation of stagecraft, and its strong and lively characterization of Bikash Roy, this play is a notable contribution to Hindi drama. At the same time, it has its own obvious limitations at the level of sensibility. The conclusion of the play lacks vision. Though Kapoor had been oppressing Ramchander for a long time, he was never brought to book. Will shameless rascals like him be so easily caught by a court? Should the common and low-placed man go on suffering meekly while he awaits poetic justice? In fact, this play could well have begun where it leaves off.

Satyendra Kumar Taneja teaches Hindi in Hans Raj College, Delhi. He has published a book on the plays of Jaya Shankar Prasad, and often contributes drama reviews to various periodicals.

Translated by Harish Trivedi.

As Kashi Remembers Kashi

Pushpesh Pant

YAAD HO KI NA YAAD HO

By Kashinath Singh

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 237, Rs. 75.00

Biographical/autobiographical writing is quite rare in Hindi. Among the few eminent exceptions, one thinks of Harivansh Rai Bachchan's four-volume autobiography, and Ramvilas Sharma's three-volume critical biography of the poet Nirala, as well as his recent evocation of his own early years. High expectations, therefore, were aroused by the recent publication of the book *Yaad ho ki na Yaad ho* (Whether You Remember or Not), containing a series of reminiscences of his contemporaries both dead and living by Kashinath Singh, an accomplished short story writer.

This is not a book of reminiscences in the conventional sense. The author lends a helping hand to the poor reader's confusion by the charming confession that he resorted to this genre when his long-standing relationship with the short story became strained for a while. Nor are these "sketches", he warns us, lest we begin to compare these with the wonderful vignettes penned by the likes of Mahadevi Varma.

Kashinath Singh labours to stress the "objectivity" he has striven for while dealing with persons he is intimate with. But then again these pieces are not "historical" essays documenting an unknown aspect of the individual. A "reconstruction of the past" in the straightforward manner of *Ghar ki Baat* (Home Truths) by Ramvilas Sharma is not what is here attempted either. The flow of anecdotal narrative is punctuated with a display of artistic wit, allowing the reader to savour the joys of Brechtian alienation. There is a semi-tongue-in-check claim staked here for novelty and virtuosity.

The first piece does justify high expectations and titillate the palate. "Holkar House men Hazari Prasad" mimics in a most tantalizing manner the highly individual style of the subject of this memoir, the critic and novelist Hazari Prasad Dwivedi (as evidenced in his virtuoso historical novel *Banabhatta ki Atmakatha*. The Autobiography/Inner Life of Bana Bhatta, the Sanskrit novelist). The ceremonial return of the revered "Acharya-ji" to Banaras Hindu University as the Head of the Hindi Department, following his banishment a few years previously, is brilliantly evoked. The famous white mane, the carefree laughter, the erudition worn lightly, are all brought alive almost effortlessly.

Nor has Kashinath Singh fought shy of exposing his great guru's warts; his yielding to the temptations of administrative office, the corroding years of power taking their own toll, his entrapment and the inevitable humiliation, the compromises, the self-justification. We are spared no gory details of petty academic politicking. One can palpably feel the anguish of the Grand Old Man, and the hurt caused by the disillusionment to the disciple. The little asides in his piece add very much to the resonance.

The concluding piece too has been carefully selected and arranged. "Garbili Garibi Woh" (That Proud Poverty) is indeed quite moving, despite the reverential hero-worshipping tone. The subject is Namvar—the idealized elder brother. Those who have known Namvar Singh only as a brilliant critic/polemicist/deft fencer in seminar skirmishes and view him primarily as a man for all seasons would be quite delighted to discover that "Doctor Saheb" after all is a human being and not all intellectual. This piece makes for a very enjoyable read—full of insights into the emigration from village to city c. 1950, break up of the joint family, residual (?) caste consciousness. Biography/hagiography and social history merge and create a wonderful effect. The kid brother of the great man is here quite content to play Boswell, however much he may wince and protest elsewhere when so characterized. There are unfortunately quite a few passages where the assumed objectivity does not save the reader from blushes.

Regrettably, the other five pieces in the book do not match the poignance and the power of these two contributions. The weakest is "Dekh Tamasha Lakari Ka" (See How the Stick Performs), which should perhaps have been relegated to an

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याद हो
कि न
याद हो काशीनाथ सिंह

appendix designed to make the reader conversant with a glossary of words of dirty endearment. "Kissa Sadhe Char Yar" (A Tale of Four and a Half Pals) suffers from several vices. We have the "pals" here all right but no "kissa" or tale to sustain the reader's interest. The bohemian life-style of Vijay Mohan Singh seems quite *passé*, and Doodhnath Singh's grandest achievement seems to have been to give his son—surely a most suitable boy—away in marriage to Kashinath Singh's daughter. Ravindra Kalia and Kamleshwar make cameo appearances in the best tradition of Bombay films or DD serials to spice the proceedings. Though all of them provide a useful and edifying contrast with the ascetic-activist Bade Bhai Saheb (elder brother), such is not the stuff memories can be made of.

Of the other pieces, "Naganandacharitam vald Assi Chauraha" (The Life of Nagananda s/o the Crossroads of Banaras) appears to be sheer padding, worth no more than a newspaper middle, and the recollection of days spent with Dhoomil as the poor man's Nirala, and is written in a contrived obituary tone. Like Muktibodh was, Dhoomil too it seems is being used here to settle scores with the living.

"Dantkathaon men Trilochan" (Trilochan in Fable) attempts to blur the line between reality and fantasy but does not quite come off. Some incidents or situations may have been humorous/ludicrous when experienced at first hand but they lose their bathos in the laboured retelling and explaining. Trilochan is a major poetic voice but this does not make all biographical trivia relating to him enjoyable memorabilia. The suspicion also arises that Kashi-bhai had decided on a title first, and then tailored the remembrance accordingly.

The very name "Kashi" conjures up magical visions; images of the Ganga ghats, legends of the poet Bharatendu, the *shehnai* of Bismillah, the Ramlila of Ramnagar, bulls and wrestlers, the poetry of that master weaver of words Kabir, the films of Satyajit Ray. It is this Kashi which is reputed to be *teen lok se nyari*, i.e., unique in all the three worlds (the earth, heaven, and the underworld). But this is not what our Kashi focuses on; he leaves that to the Raghubir Singhs and the Rajesh Bedis. What he has concerned himself with is the antics and adventures of Hindi writers in this wonderland.

In the end, what remains is a touch of disappointment. The promise of the first piece is not fulfilled—and there are two first pieces here perhaps, as the last one was the first to be written. The title comes from one of the most cherished couplets of the Urdu poet Meer: "Whether you remember or not, I remember every little bit." Well, Kashinath Singh has done his bit, but these memories may yet fade.

Pushpesh Pant is Associate Professor of Diplomacy at the JNU, New Delhi, and frequently writes for television. He also wrote a novel when young: Jawani ke Din *(Days of Youth).*

Memoirs of a Satirist

Vishwanath Tripathi

JAANE PAHCHANE LOG

by Hari Shankar Parsai

Rajkamal Prakashan, 1991, pp. 126, Rs. 50.00

Though Hari Shankar Parsai has also written short stories and novels, his characteristic genre is the essay. The present work, *Jaane Pahchane Log* (Familiar People), is a collection of his memoirs. While there is no dearth of writers of memoirs in Hindi, it is the famous *Chhayavadi* poetess Mahadevi Varma who has most adorned this genre. The subjects of most of her memoirs not only belong to the lower classes but they are also from the lowest castes, and the majority of them are women.

Parsai's memoirs belong to Mahadevi's tradition. They may be utterly different in craft and style but they are quite similar in their subject matter and in their effect. Had Parsai written in exactly the same style as Mahadevi, one could not have placed him in her class. This is what the development of a tradition is all about. Parsai has written about Bhola Ram, Pandit Sundar Sharma, Natthu Lal Sarraf, Chirau Maharaj and other common humble souls like these. If they are made memorable it is because of their individuality and their peculiarities. The very objective of a memoir must be to depict the individuality of a character in such a way as to make it unforgettable. There are many who attempt to commemorate the famous and the mighty, but not very many writers take up a Bhola Ram or a Natthu Lal Sarraf.

It's not through his public pose or posture that a character becomes memorable for a reader but rather through his personal and peculiar mode of conduct. It is personality which breeds intimacy, especially some such quirk of personality as may distinguish a character from all others and make the reader take him to his heart. Needless to say that to achieve this effect, the writer must possess both breadth and depth. A writer of memoirs must pick and prune mercilessly when selecting and shaping his non-heroic heroes. What is decisive here is how well he loves life, how fine his discrimination is, and just what kind of a person attracts him.

In *Jaane Pahchane Log*, one of the memoirs relates to Bhola Ram. This is how Parsai sketches him. Bhola Ram was a servant in a hotel. He was well built, dark of complexion and about forty years old. He sat on a stool near the window, and kept one eye on the road and the other on his customers. A popular song of the times was *"Ghayal jiya pukare, baalam aan milo*, and these words were constantly on Bhola's lip. A customer would ask for a glass of water, and Bhola would say: "Right away sir—*baalam aaan milo!"* Helping another customer to a second helping of some vegetable, he would say "But you are eating very little, saheb! Not a case of *ghayal jiya pukare*, is it?"

To read Parsai is to get out of the world of books and to look at the very reality of the country, and to be moved and thrilled in turn by its variety and its inequity. A typical piece of writing by Parsai is quite short, often no longer than three or four pages. But there's hardly a notable event of post-Independence India on which Parsai has not written. He is a writer of this phase of our national life, of the passing of our present. His short pieces are usually read one at a time but taken together, they constitute a saga of post-Independence India.

And what distinguishes this particular saga? In India after independence, it is nationalist struggle suddenly ceased to be. Rather, they now began to be used as masks. Words such as public service, *ahimsa*, sacrifice, liberality, struggle and patriotism all retained their outer form but were turned inside out so far as their content and practice was concerned. This contradiction between word and deed and the dramatic irony arising from it are one of the chief features of the scenario of post-Independence India. That is why

An image recurs throughout Parsai's writing. The main gate to the royal palace of success is locked. People, masses of people, are banging their bloodied heads against the gates. But the clever ones are able to enter the palace by a back door, through the sewer, covering their noses with their handkerchiefs. To escape the stench some are even going so far as to have their noses chopped off. But in such times, what should they do each pore of whose skin is a nose?

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satire has emerged as a genre of central importance in post-Independence India, at least in Hindi literature, and as for Parsai, he is simply the greatest Hindi satirist of our times.

In the Introduction to *Jaane Pahchane Log* Parsai has written:

> When I began writing in 1947, India had just become independent. The place was positively crawling with people who had gone to jail during the struggle for Independence and were now being called *'sunamdhanya'* (of hallowed name), *'pratahsmaraniya'* (to be invoked every morning), and *'tapopoot'* (purified by penance). On each road you could sight a *'tapopoot'* or two. You couldn't even branch off into a lane to squat down for a quiet piddle without the fear that suddenly some *'tapopoot'* might come walking along. This was a phase of sentiment, devotion and worship. I too was devoted to such people from the bottom of my heart. These were people to whom politics had meant sacrifice. Of the horrible humiliation they had to go through when politics began to mean a mere skirmish for power, my writing provides some record.

An image recurs throughout Parsai's writing. The main gate to the royal palace of success is locked. People, masses of people, are banging their bloodied heads against the gates. But the clever ones are able to enter the palace by a back door, through the sewer, covering their noses with their handkerchiefs. To escape the stench some are even going so far as to have their noses chopped off. But in such times, what should they do each pore of whose skin is a nose?

Such a person each pore of whose skin serves as a nose is of course the writer, whose sensitivity causes him acute anguish at each inhuman event or circumstance. And satire is the mode of creativity triggered by a sense of such inhuman inequality. Such satire is also an important plank of a new aesthetics. Satire hits out at what is ugly. Beauty arises out of *sushama* is *vishamata*, i.e., inequality of unevenness. *Vishamata* comes of excessive growth or excessive lack. Excessive growth, especially of just one part, is not really development but a symptom of cancer. Such imbalanced ugliness is a function of surplus, surplus not only in the Marxist sense but also in the sense in which Walter Pater spoke of the main function of beauty being a removal of surplus.

Parsai's satire mounts an attack on the unnecessary surplus of our social conduct. In so doing it helps construct a new aesthetic while it also constitutes the moral voice of post-Independence India.

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Translated by Harish Trivedi.

Assessing Ajneya

Roger Hooker

AJNEYA

By Prabhakar Machve

Rajpal and Sons, Delhi, 1991, pp. 104, Rs. 30.00

Since Ajneya was a controversial figure he provoked extreme views among his critics. At one extreme are those who drown him in tidal waves of hagiographic *ghee* while at the other are those who so roast him in the fires of criticism that hardly a charred fragment of his work remains. Happily this work falls into neither of these categories. Machve is sympathetic towards his subject, whom of course he knew very well over a long period of years, but he is by no means uncritical. The criticism is always constructive in that it helps us to appreciate and understand the author's work better, rather than making us feel it is not worth reading. This indeed is the hallmark of a good critic when (s)he is writing about a good writer.

The book is divided into eleven chapters which describe Ajneya's life, personality, poetry, short stories, novels, essays, travelogues, criticism, translations, and finally his place in literature. Three appendices outline the chronology of his life, his published works, and a list of 35 critical works on him by other writers. The book is thus comprehensive in its scope, covering all aspects of Ajneya's voluminous output, except for his single drama (*Uttar Priyadarsi*). In a book of such brief compass the price of such comprehensiveness is inevitably a certain superficiality. The reader who is looking for a detailed criticism of Ajneya's prose or poetry must look elsewhere. This is a book written by an old man (the author died shortly after its publication) and as such is full of nuggets of wisdom about its subject which we do not often find elsewhere.

It is also full of factual errors of which two of the most glaring are to be found on page 55. Machve refers to a character in Ajneya's second novel, *Nadi Ke Dvip (Islands in the Stream)* as 'Chandrabhushan who is a Communist character'. In fact the character's name is Chandramadhava and he only becomes a Communist at the end of the book. He refers to Bhuvan's relationship with Gaura as being the heart of the novel, but in fact he means Rekha. We can forgive these errors in an old man whose powers were declining, but the reader who is not familiar with Ajneya's work does need to be aware that some of the facts set out in the present work cannot be taken on trust.

The book can best be read then as the reminiscences of an old man about an important writer whom he knew well. We can ignore the mistakes, provided we realise that they are mistakes, but we eagerly pick up the nuggets of wisdom and insight. In the remainder of this review we draw attention to some of these.

He points out that Ajneya fully revealed himself to no-one and lived up to his name. His participation in the revolutionary movement and his experience of jail created a cocoon around him which others could not penetrate. Throughout his life he was never able fully to commit himself to others, and in fact he embodied in his own person Sartre's principle 'Hell is other people'. He had an acute literary perception but was something of a simpleton in the art of living, and when relationships broke down he could only see his own side of the quarrel. In his early years he had to struggle against the closest members of his family while in later life he was surrounded by fawning and sycophantic acolytes. Machve draws attention to his striking physical appearance, his meticulously precise use of language, his disciplined labour as a writer, and to the fact that he knew many languages (Machve lists Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, French, German and English). He was also a man of many practical skills. He could drive or ride a bicycle, moped, truck, jeep and car and indeed once drove from Assam to Peshawar. In a few short pages Machve builds up a more convincing portrait of Ajneya the man and the writer than several other critics who have written at much greater length.

He traces the main influences on Ajneya's poetry, which he identifies as the poetry of England and America, of Bengal, his Hindi predecessors especially Maithili Sharan Gupta, and, in his later work, the poetry of Japan, and of Zen Buddhism. The main theme of his poetry is nature, followed by 'love or human relationships' (*prem ya manaviya sambandha*). He also lists our contemporary social ills, especially those of 'civilisation' (*sabhyata*)—which is always a negative concept for Ajneya. He sees Ajneya's attitude to civilisation as being summed up in his poem 'The Snake':

> *Sanp!*
> *tum sabhya to hue nahin*
> *nagar men basna*
> *bhi tumhen nahin aya.*
> *ek bat puchun—(uttar doge?)*
> *tab kaise sikha dasna -*
> *vish kahan paya?*

Snake! You were not civilised, nor did you learn how to live in a city. I ask one thing—(will you answer?) Then how did you learn to bite—where did you find your poison?

The chapter on Ajneya's short stories mainly consists of long quotations from other writers. Particularly interesting is the comment that a theme of several of the short stories is the love between brother and sister. This is also a key theme of his first novel *Shekhar: Ek Jivani (Shekhar: A Life)*. Here, Shekhar's relationship with his own sister, Sarasvati, is central to the first part of the book, while his relationship with Shashi, whom we are led to suppose is his cousin, forms the climax of the work. Machve sees the man-woman relationship as central to this novel and draws attention to the view of Jainendra Kumar that Ajneya describes it at too intellectual a level.

Ajneya's two travel books represent a new genre in Hindi writing. Machve points out that before the coming of the railways most travellers had been either pilgrims or business men. Travel out of interest in the place one is going to for its own sake is a twentieth century idea as far as Hindi literature is concerned. Machve points out that Ajneya's foreign travel increased his sense of Indian identity.

Finally, Ajneya's best years as a writer were between 1941 and 1970—which were crucial years for India as well. Ajneya was involved in most of the main events of these years both as a writer and as a thinker. After 1970 his powers declined and he became repetitive. Such a sentiment will be heresy to the acolytes, but even Shakespeare wrote some bad plays and to recognise this is to be able the better to appreciate the great ones. To dare to criticise Ajneya as Machve does, the better enables us to appreciate the value of his good work, which will occupy a lasting place in Hindi writing.

The Reverend Roger Hooker learnt Hindi at Allahabad and Sanskrit at Banaras. He now lives and works in a multi-ethnic parish in Birmingham, U.K., and is completing a doctoral thesis on the fiction of Ajneya.

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Lament in the Times of Plenty

K.G. Verma

KAVITA KA JANPAD

Edited by Ashok Vajpeyi

Radhakrishna Prakashan, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 302, Rs. 175.00

—sab kuchh pratikool tha, tab bhi sambhav
kiya maine
kavita ko
aur apne aap ko,
dhanyavaad!
—Srikant Verma

—those trying turns
I stubborned for word
simultaneously for self
and made it -
Thank you everybody!

The volume *Kavita Ka Janpad* is a collection of articles culled from the prestigious but now defunct literary bimonthly *Purvagraha*, a venture devoted to the cultivation of literature and the arts. To Ashok Vajpeyi, its founder editor, a highly regarded figure among the cognoscenti, goes the credit for sustaining its publication for 100 issues since its inception in 1974 in Bhopal. Through a number of innovative undertakings, he set in motion cultural practices which led to the emergence of a unique literary ethos which retained its excitement for well over two decades.

The appearance of *Purvagraha* coincided with the fading out of periodicals, such as *Kalpana* (Hyderabad), *Gyanodaya* (Calcutta), *Nai Kavita* (Allahabad) and *Lahar* (Jodhpur), spread over the sprawling Hindi belt during the seventies. Vajpeyi's brand of literary commitment provided a nucleus to sharply individualized responses and isolated voices consistently sidelining the socio-historical basis in literary journalism. Here was, then, an ideological formation engaged in the task of building a fraternity. In the zeal to preserve the sanctity of the arts and uphold "the pristine and inviolate glory of literary discourse," Vajpeyi and his associates came down heavily upon attitudes and alliances where sloganeering, historicizing tendencies were at work. After a while, Ashok Vajpeyi and the Bharat Bhavan were almost synonymized.

Conceptually, those who inhabit this *Janpad* or territory of shared convictions constitute what Stanley Fish would call an "interpretative community." Thus, we find here eleven voices making in unison twenty-three contributions: Kunwar Narain-3, Vipin Kumar Agarwal-3, Ramesh Chandra Shah-3, Ashok Kelkar-1, Vishnu Khare-1, Vageesh Shukla-2, Prabhat Tripathi-2, Navneeta Dev Sen-1, Udayan Vajpeyi-2, Madan Soni-3, and Ashok Vajpeyi-2. For them, the poetic sphere has progressively narrowed in the face of widespread dehumanization as is evident in the erosion of values which meaningful dialogue that "allows us to talk to one another" alone can arrest. An undercurrent of desperation runs throughout, be it a scrutiny of the complex nature of the social reception of the creative, or the importance of experimentation; problems of identity, or a fresh look at the theoretic foundations of the poetic. Closely analysed and persuasively put, the scenario takes into account inherited and naturalized structures of texts from the leading post-independence exponents i.e. Agyeya, Raghuvir Sahay, Srikant Verma, Trilochan Shastri, Kunwar Narain and Kedar Nath Singh.

The disquisitions in the volume could form a sequel to an earlier intervention made in *Teesra Sakshya* (1979) and be characterized as the extension of an anxiety about the fate of the word in the context of contemporary environments (intellectual social and literary). Rather than indulge in catchy, artful jargon, the collectively argued case here is an earnest effort to rescue the Truth of Word from endless devaluations which it has suffered along the way.

Strangely, Ashok Vajpeyi and his allies decontextualize the word from the "community of meanings" (Frank Lentricchia) and consequently deny aim or programme to it in history. True, *Purvagraha* periodically foregrounded "deviations" from the wider questions of social and political concerns. Humanist and historicist thought in turn could never be reconciled to such a position and invariably rejected with matching vehemence all that it stood for. But that is not the problem. Can we in our time, while discriminating in favour of ideals dear to us, remain snug in a finely carved out niche? Has this literary grid no stake in things outside? In a bid to save the word from further debasement—a typical fallout of the 'orthodox' post-modern habits—its randomization calls for checks. Hence, the vigil and the urgency to rethink the problems of 'meaning' and 'sanity' and make them look like large-scale propositions. Vajpeyi's own poetic output as a counterthrust is substantially directed to this end.

In a bid to highlight new imperatives interspersed in the main text, Vajpeyi, the editor, forcefully re-states them in the *Parishisth* (Supplement). He finds the cumulative weight of new cultural configurations as a result of reckless consumerism too much. Cautioning against the trendy days of global vulgarism he continues with faith in the future of the word as "lived experience"—word, that can embody and yield an unobstructed view of reality, a privileged and autonomous centre. Dismissing off-hand many attempts made in non-literary circuits to convert the poetic sphere into a colony, he implores the Literary Institutions to stand guard against prevalent cultural vandalisms. Mindful of the tragic collapse of the Marxist revolutionary ideal, he is at pains to recognize and encourage the need for self-criticism which is also a self-conscious acceptance of the variegated shades of our long and continuous tradition with immense potentialities for pluralistic openings. A return, therefore, to our rich heritage reflected in native subtexts is the best available alternative to ruptural colonial discourse.

Be that as it may, the globe-trotting Ashok Vajpeyi should be aware of the threat (real or illusionary) to the stability of the centres of praxis and stable confines of structures. The struggle to propose for literature the same old dignified presence which reaffirms "truth, value and rationality" could ambiguously exercise a veto on the "rights of history". While advocating pluralism, being merely deferential to Otherness is a stance that shows a disinclination for the outstanding. Silence towards the unsaid may make us look dated and hidebound.

Ashok Vajpeyi, an ace controversialist right since the sixties when he started *Samavat*, *Pahchan*, and more recently *Samas*, has often found himself, through his editorial utterances and participatory moves, in the midst of crises. Apart from matters literary he has been in confrontation on diverse fronts such as the National Cultural Policy, *Kavita Ka Suraj* and even the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. He has always been himself and unflinching in the face of fierce disagreements. Having experienced the pleasures, problems, and perils of critical endeavour for more than a quarter century, he could broaden areas of involvement both at home and abroad. Culture as a form of expression he did exploit effectively, and has gone on with the belief that the word will endure and there are enclaves which will always refuse 'subjugation' or 'colonization'.

But the thought that acts of emphasis are undergoing unheard of transformations gathers strength with each passing day. Years ago in a critical study *Philhal* (1970), Vajpeyi surprised the Hindi world by an entirely radical appraisal of the New Writing, a revisioning of the oppositional. To designate the structuration in changed circumstances as *kitsch* is to completely misjudge the implications of what is on the agenda. Of course, we shall in course of time be startled by unregarded equivalences in the smutty regions. Hopefully the *Janpad* will be the venue to pull us out of 'currently paralyzed debates'.

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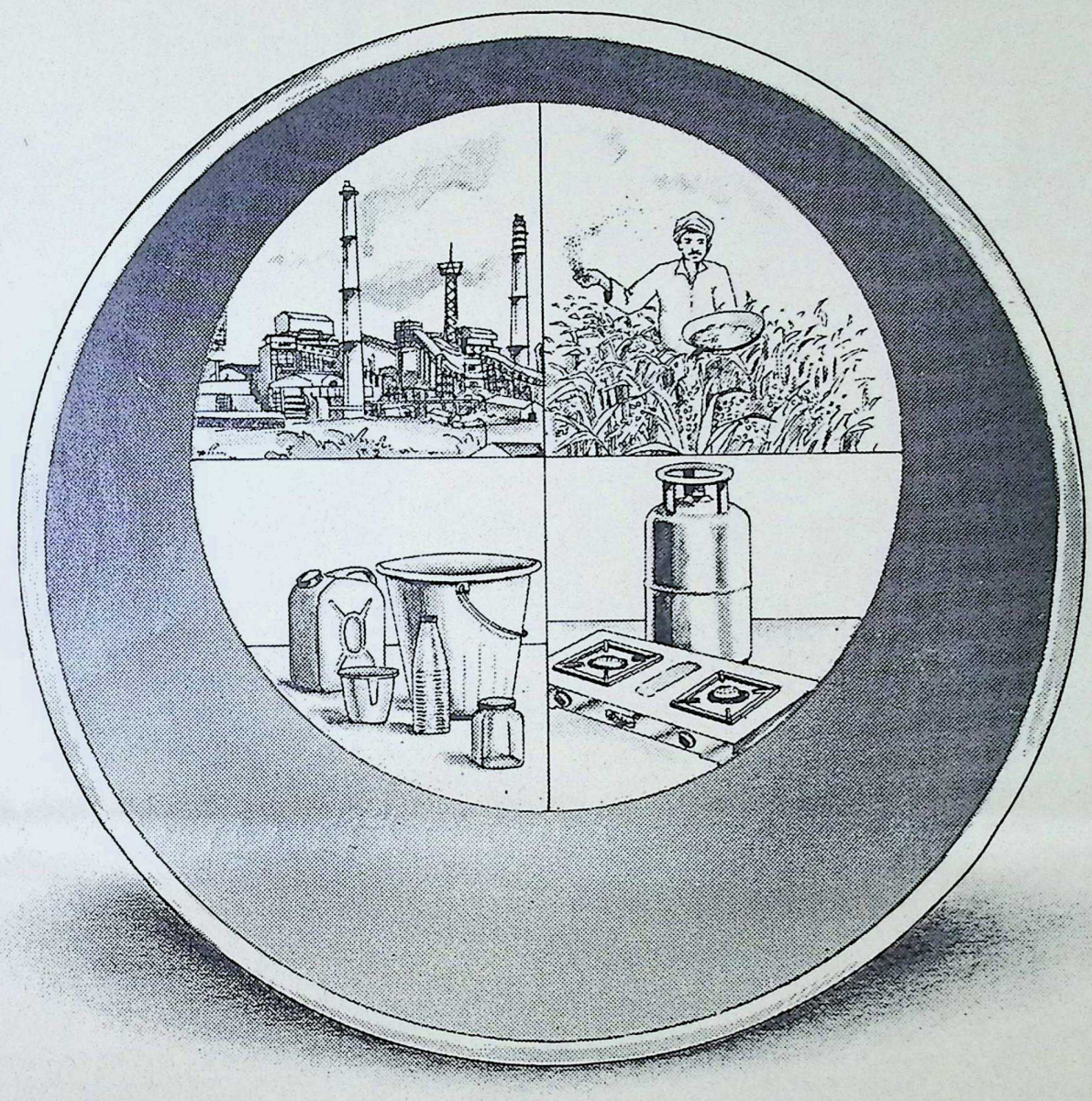

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Evolution And The Creator

P.S. Rao

THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION
By John Maynard Smith
Canto, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 354, Rs. 195.00

One of the most important obstacles to the spread of "scientific temper" among the Indian laiety appears to be the notion that science and religion differ in their goals. Science is utilitarian and at best helps us to improve our living conditions while religion grapples with the nature of Reality. Indian culture being mainly structured for the pursuit of truth through the ages, science has generally been given short shrift in it. However, this perception of dichotomy may be resolved on deeper reflection. Firstly, as B.F. Skinner points out, science is only a tool that enables us to predict what nature would do under given circumstances; it is not nature that follows scientific laws but it is man who follows them in order to manipulate his environment. Thus, we may think of the scientific laws as a means to generate the set of truths about nature that we marvel at and experience. Secondly, as Karl Popper remarks, "Science is most significant as one of the greatest spiritual adventures that man has yet known". Behind the everyday world that we experience, there is an underlying reality that science reveals: the difference between the two perceptions harks back to Shankara's transcendent reality in the famous discourses on the serpent-rope illusion.

Maynard Smith helps us to see the spiritual quality of science in the sense defined in his book *The Theory of Evolution* although he rules out the hand of the creator very firmly:

> ". . . the fact of evolution was not generally accepted until a theory had been put forward to suggest how evolution had occurred, and in particular how organisms could become adapted to their environment; in the absence of such a theory, adaptation suggested design, and so implied a creator. It was this need which Darwin's theory of natural selection satisfied."

And when he states,

> "It is the job of this book to explain the past in terms of processes known to be going on in the present. . . We must now turn to the more direct evidence concerning the past provided by fossils, and inquire whether the patterns of change revealed are of a kind which can be explained by the known laws of variation, selection, and inheritance."

he captures the essence of the suggestion that science is only a predictive tool.

On both counts, those who have strong religious convictions have nothing to fear from this book; it will only help them to create for themselves a more exciting image of God's living kingdom.

The subject of the book, as Richard Dawkins points out in his foreword, is intrinisically interesting and it is written by a scientist who is "too big a man to go along with . . . (the) puritanical emasculation of language". It is bound to be good and the reader does not need much persuasion to go on with it. One can only whet his appetite with a few comments and quotes.

There are a number of facts that need explaining about living creatures: the diversity, the variation or polymorphism and the extinction of the species. There is also the interesting phenomenon of development simulating evolution, i.e., ontogeny following in the footsteps of phylogeny. There is also the question of whether evolution continues to be in operation today. If evolution is all about the struggle for existence and withstanding pressures of natural selection, where does altruism fit in? Is artificial selection in the laboratory the same process as selection in the wild? All these are explained in the book in individual chapters. Among the most interesting is the chapter on protein polymorphism. Differences between members of a single population are based on differences between amino acid sequences in a particular enzyme in all the individuals of the population. "If a gene is represented by only one allele in a population, we have no way of knowing that it exists at all, because we recognize genes by the differences they cause". So the problem is one of identifying genotypes. "In principle, molecular biology has provided a way out of these difficulties. If we knew the amino acid sequences of a particular enzyme in all the individuals of a particular population, we would be able to identify all the relevant alleles in the population and their frequencies. We could even recognize the presence of a gene which did not vary. . . There is an obvious drawback to the various methods of investigating selection on enzyme loci. . . It is that there is no evidence from the functioning of the enzymes themselves as to why different alleles should be favoured in different circumstances. Thus, if one were to suggest that the reason the frequency of the gene for melanism in Peppered Moth has increased in industrial areas is that it is closely linked to some other unidentified locus on which selection is acting, the suggestion would rightly be laughed out of court". Here we see an example of the style of writing in this book: first the author defines the problem, suggests a solution and then goes on to tell us the problems one might face with the suggested solution.

Is evolution continuing? This question is important apart from being entertaining and is pursued in the last chapter. There is an engaging discussion on Michael Chance's proposal that in primates, intelligence evolved as an adaptation to life in societies and has only later been applied to manipulate the material world. This suggestion is, incidentally, similar to B.F. Skinner's view that verbal behaviour is a set of "operants" or notional tools designed to manipulate other members in a verbal community.

The Introduction to the Canto edition is, as Richard Dawkins remarks in his foreword, "an elegant essay which can be recommended in its own right as a summary of important recent developments in evolutionary theory". In particular is the interesting challenge to the "central dogma" that acquired characters are not inherited because information cannot pass from protein to DNA, but only from DNA to protein. But reverse transcription occurs and this might be a nuisance to the central dogma but for the fact that the step from RNA to protein is not yet shown to be reversible. Then there is a remark on the subject of language that is perhaps among the rare instances of inadequate representation of an important opposite view in the book: "If other evolutionary novelties are any guide, linguistic competence did not arise from nothing: It is a modified version of some earlier mental capacity." Noam Chomsky would disagree. He believes that language is a distinctive mental organ in its own right and is not an extension of some other cognitive capacity. The American Sign Language used by the Gardners' chimpanzees, according to Chomsky's view, is not an instance of the existence of language in subhuman primates.

Maynard Smith points out the particular difficulties of the first 'inventors' during the evolution as against the modern ones: "All that the modern inventors had to do, in most cases, is to combine in a new way inventions and discoveries already made". After reading the book, one wonders if all that Maynard Smith had to do was to put together Darwin, Mendel and Watson and Crick to make up his story, whether it had been "all that" easy. Surely, he leaves his stamp on the book; if he eliminates a mythical creator, he also helps us to see that science is truly spiritual in its enterprise.

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A Romantic Rebel

Rajendra Yadav

THE HEART BREAKS FREE/THE WILD ONE: TWO NOVELLAS
By Ismat Chughtai
Kali for Women, 1993, pp. 156, Rs. 75.00

Kali is a publishing house which promotes women's writing as a cause. It is not easy to understand, therefore, why it has picked up these two utterly sentimental stories by a writer as formidable as Ismat Chughtai. It seems to me that while to be romantic or sentimental might well have been a form of rebellion in the times of Ismat, for it was then a rejection of reality, it constitutes today a flight from reality. The sentimental story of the Wish-it-were-so variety is not always rainbow-coloured like dreams, for it can as often be full of morbidity and frustration: Wish I were dead, or Wish the world would come to an end. To avenge or compensate for in dreams each defeat one suffers in real life is basically a sign of adolescent sentimentality. Amrita Pritam hasn't yet been able to come out of this state of mind, for she has written hardly any story which goes beyond the psychology of a fifteen or sixteen year old. She is a classic example of arrested growth. Nor is it strange that romantic day-dreams in Amrita have now given way to spirituality and mysticism. To go to Amrita Pritam after reading Mahadevi Varma, Krishna Sobti, Mahashweta Devi, Qurratulain Hyder and Mannu Bhandari is like reading Enid Blyton—and an Enid Blyton, moreover, who is from time to time trying to be a Marie Correlli, by setting up the illusion of the sublimities of mysticism.

"Fettered, I felt as mistress of my fetters," sang Mahadevi Varma seventy years ago, for there was then no hope of liberation and the greatest resistance a woman could possibly put up was by giving voice to her very enslavement. Like Meera four hundred years ago, her rebellion consisted in announcing her independence through choosing to seek God through *bhakti*, and through transcending her age and society by submerging herself in the world of spirituality. Ismat is probably the first Indian woman writer whose created women neither commit suicide nor retire into spirituality nor acquiesce in their fate and just cry. They speak out clearly and boldly what is in their minds and in their bodies, and they come out of male-imposed social determinants as unwilling martyrs. The circumstances which had been analysed intellectually by Mahadevi Varma in her book *Shrinkhala ki Kariyan* (Links of a Chain) are the very ones given a fictional form by Ismat—probably while each writer remained oblivious of the other. Unlike Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain from the beginning of this century or the feminist writers of our own day, Ismat did not dream dreams of a separate and alternative world, but has shown the courage and run the risk of trying to forge an identity for herself while situated within the world of male hegemony. As a writer she surely stands today alongside Taslima Nasreen.

Ismat is basically a romantic rebel, who has felt and defied the pressure of all the repression of a patriarchal society with natural sensitivity and at the level of sensory consciousness. As Dileep Kaur Tiwana put it so well at the beginning of her autobiography, "History is inscribed on human bodies before it is set down on paper." Ismat is the chronicler of female repression so inscribed on the lives and bodies of oppressed women. She says out loud and clear what gentlewomen of honourable families must neither see nor feel nor say, and this is what makes her the most "objectionable" fiction writer of her generation. Not only does she observe and express what goes on under "The Quilt" but she also turns up as a female tonga-driver to challenge the world of men. If women were either to keep at home or even set up as prostitutes, that's fine by men, but what they can't stand at all is that women should encroach on their own traditional preserve and drive a tonga and be self-supporting. Most of Ismat's stories are a validation of such experiences and circumstances, which proper middle-class ladies dare not even name.

From this point of view, it seems to me that the only other Indian woman writer of fiction of comparable significance is Krishna Sobti, whose works should be studied alongside Ismat Chughtai's. Sobti's whole artistic development, from *Daar se Bichhari* (Strayed from the Flock) to *Zindaginama* (Chronicle of a Life), traces a zig-zag progress of female consciousness—"The Zig-zag Line" being incidentally also the title of an autobiographical story by Ismat. Sobti's protagonist is, in *Daar se Bichhari*, a commodity to be sold and bought and looted and abducted, who tries to please each one of her "masters", finds the meaning of her own life in keeping them happy, and is as faithful as a dog or a cow. (Like Chekhov's darling?) She is the beloved melting in submission in love and romance in "Tin Pahaar" (Three Hills) and "Baadalon ke Ghere" (Rings of Cluds), while in "Mitro Marjani" (The Cursed Mitro), she is the formidable Mitro who has learnt and is quite willing to teach the language of the body, and is not bound by any notions of family honour. In "Surajmukhi Andhere ke" (Sunflowers in the Dark), she is a woman becoming her own person by exercising her options and making her experiments in that most explosive area of Indian social life, sex. Later, in *Zindaginama*, she is a synonym for life at its broadest and widest, and struggling at the frontiers of history and geography. The female consciousness of Ismat too has had a similar zig-zag evolution, except that she had begun writing thirty years before Krishna Sobti. Ismat has come out of the Muslim bourgeoisie, while Krishna Sobti has been a part of the determined Panjabi community going through the ravages of the storm of the Partition. The stage of intellectual development following on from Ismat and Krishna Sobti can be seen in Qurratulain Hyder.

Seen in the context of this brief background, the works here published by Kali fall far short of doing justice to Ismat. The latter of the two long short stories here, "The Wild One" (*Ziddi*), seems written for a film and is full of the most improbable events in the world. It contains storm, tempest, death, incidence-coincidence and what have you, crowned ultimately by the death of the hero and the heroine together. There is only one point in the whole story where Ismat's imagination catches fire, when Asha literally sets fire to the world which would not let the hapless lovers meet, and then dies contented and fulfilled with her Puran. Ismat surely had a suttee scene at the back of her mind here.

The other story, "The Heart Breaks Free" (*Dil ki Duniya*), is set in the familiar world of Ismat: the closed and close world of a Muslim lower-middle-class family, with constant dialogue and dispute between three or four kinds of aunts (*chachi, tai, phuphi* etc.) to say nothing of the grandmother, while life ebbs and flows. We have here contempt bred out of familiarity, desire and sexual frustration, engagements and weddings, festivals and funerals, and in the middle of it all Aunt Qudsia, whose story really it is. Her husband has come home from England with a *mem* for another wife, and the young Qudsia is back at her father's house, left to pass the rest of her life between one attack of hysteria and the next.

A closely parallel life is that of old Pathani Bua who had in similar circumstances cracked up and can now be found lying around here and there: in her little room, under a tree, on the steps of the mosque. She is in love with a *pir*, a holy man who lived five hundred years ago, one Ghazi Miyan, and it is this beloved of hers who is ever with her, talking, quarrelling, loving. The Bua always sings of him, and her songs are as often folk songs as *bhajans* by Meera. After much scandal, members of her family bring Bua home and have her treated by a *hakim*, who always prescribes a potion of *jamal-gota* no matter what the disease. This drains her out completely, she begins to grow cold, and is soon found lying dead out on the street. The Bua's death shocks Qudsia into self-recognition, for something very similar would be her fate too, and one day, she quietly runs off with Uncle Sabir. The family spread it about that she has gone and jumped into a well.

It hardly needs to be said that in this story, Ismat is to be found not only in her true rebellious colours but also in cracking good form as a master story-teller. The story is turned into an important work of art by its intensely intimate domestic atmosphere, its style rippling with *zenana* turns of speech, and the significant contexts it evokes of Muslim culture. This is a dimension of Ismat's art which I think can hardly be translated, and without it, it is impossible to recreate that ambience which gives the story its remarkable authenticity.

Actually, to read such a truly home-spun story-teller of Urdu-Hindi in English translation has been for me quite an irksome experience. Possibly, one may not face this problem when reading Nirmal Varma in translation. To tell the truth, I was constantly looking to "read" the familiar Urdu-Hindi words and phrases *through* the English translation, which I thus rejected. My experience was pretty much like trying to piece together the broken shards and fragments of a china or a glass jar, and feeling a sense of achievement when actually able to fit the right piece in the right place: Aha, so that's the original for this English word! At one level this is to be alienated from the story and to exist in a state of tension and distance, and at another level it is also to reconstruct or rediscover the original text for oneself through the translation.

I wonder how readers unfamiliar with Hindi-Urdu would respond to this translation.

Rajendra Yadav is an eminent novelist, short story writer, literary critic and translator. He is editor of the important literary magazine Hans *started by Munshi Premchand.*

Translated from the Hindi by Harish Trivedi

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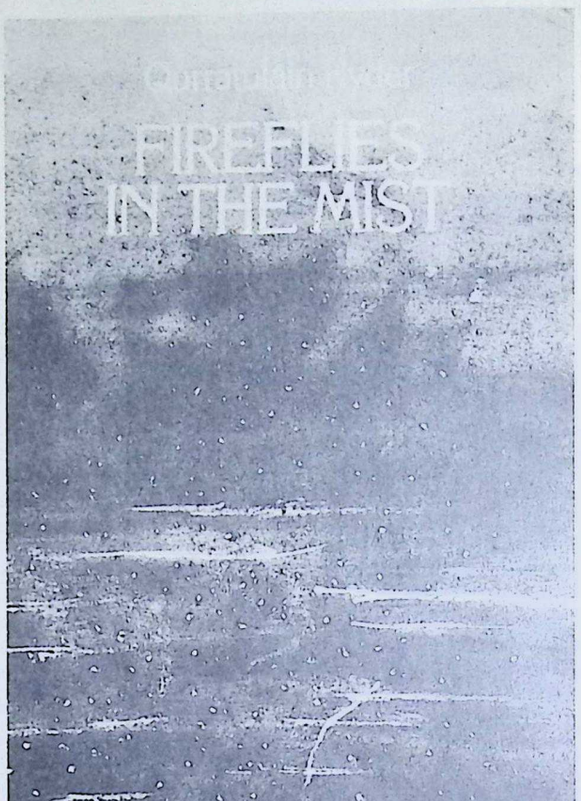
Ephemeral Interactions

Leela Gandhi

FIREFLIES IN THE MIST

By Qurratulain Hyder

Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 347, Rs. 300.00



Qurratulain Hyder, one of India's leading novelists and winner of the Jnanpith award, is best known for her epic saga, *Aag ka Dariya (River of Fire)*. Her writings have been translated into several Indian languages, and also into English and Russian. *Fireflies in the Mist* is an English translation by the author herself of her Urdu novel *Aakhir-e-Shab ka Hamsafar*, first published in 1979.

Hyder's work shares with other North Indian writers of her generation a generically coherent preoccupation with the Partition of India. *Fireflies in the Mist* repeats her exploration of this subject through its panoramic sweep of the period between 1939 to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Hyder's novelistic account of this period produces a sensitive encounter between history and fiction, and in the same gesture, between the unpredictability and chaos of historical events and the pleasurable order of narrative structures. This dialectic between history and fiction is often fraught, alternating between the author's attempt to animate and express history through the felt lives of her characters, and simultaneously struggling to release these characters from the constraints of historicity.

The novel is structured around the lives of three women friends, Deepali Sarkar, Rosie Bannerjee and Jahanara, who, as college students, become involved with the communist movement in Bengal. Inspired by revolutionary figures like Kalpana Dutt and Preetilata Wadekar, these women are inducted into the freedom struggle by Rehan Ahmed, the enigmatic and contemplative leader of the Bengal terrorists. The lives of these four characters detail the process of Independence, Partition, and the further division of the country into Pakistan and Bangladesh. Their relationships with each other, likewise, parallel the consolidation and division of nations during this period. Old solidarities and connections disintegrate over the question of Pakistan, and the characters physically disperse by the end of the novel. The Urdu title, *Aakhir-e-Shab ke Hamsafar*, or, Fellow Travellers of the Last Part of the Night, points to this novel's elegic account of the brevity and tenuous nature of human relationships. The title *Fireflies in the Mist* similarly suggests the ephemeral quality of human interaction, and further foregrounds its powerlessness against the onslaught of history and ideology.

In the first part of the novel, set in pre-Independence India, history is expressed as a grand narrative against which the characters are unable to articulate themselves. This impression is reinforced by Hyder's, perhaps excessive, concern with social documentation and the need to supply plausible contexts for her fiction. The accumulation of facts and events effectively dwarfs the lives of the protagonists. Much in the Lukacsian tradition of social realism, Hyder's characters, at this stage of the novel, appear as representative types and every detail is manipulated to achieve the unfolding of this typicality. Deepali, Rosie and Jahanara are quite literally and respectively 'windows' into Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities, their fraught relationship with each other and with the British. So also, everything about Rosie's father, Rev. Bannerjee, from his conversion to his apolitical stance, his kindliness and dogmatism, stereotypes the upper caste upwardly mobile Indian Christian he is supposed to represent. There are few humanizing touches, or idiosyncracies to effect his release into fiction. Other characters, similarly, become the mere pretext for ideological debate. Here, for instance, is Mushir, one of Rosie's comrades, giving her the correct line on the communal question:

> Look, the trouble is when a Hindu glories in his traditions it is Indian culture and Indian philosophy. When a muslim mentions his own heritage he is a communalist. We must correct these attitudes before it is too late. Or else, comrades, this country will break up after the British leave.

This speech is followed by an unsparing factual account of the communist movement in India, complete with names and dates. To some extent, Mushir's tone is fairly representative of Hyder's authorial practice—for the narrator too constantly intervenes to supply the reader information about R.P. Dutt, eighteenth-century Bengal, or the founding of All India Radio. If the first part of *Fireflies in the Mist* successfully dramatises dull historical detail, it sometimes does so at the cost of imaginative engagement.

In the latter half of the novel, however, Hyder's tone and focus significantly shifts towards the imaginative requirements of fiction. This process is assisted by the novel's sequential progression from the "significant" past into contemporaneity. The characters are suddenly, and perhaps wishfully, liberated from the fixture of history into the unrecorded present, and from the goal-directed formulae of the terrorist movement into the formlessness and contingent chaos of their own individual lives. Following the dispersals occasioned by the Partition, each character moves in a different direction—towards domesticity, spirituality or mainstream politics. So also, the tight local collectivity of the terrorist movement is replaced by the ambivalence of diaspora and dissatisfied individualism. This process, however, entails a certain freeing—which Hyder's prose itself seems to reflect, becoming much more impressionistic and fragmented:

> His memory would turn into a fragrance and reach the raintree grove thousands of miles away. O Rower of the Painted Boat. You came neither with the ebb nor with the flow. Koyels sang in the honey-month of *Chait*. Fishermen went out with their nets under the winter moon. Ladybirds buzzed among the summer flowers "The crazy boat of love sails on sands as well." Bloody nonsense.
> One was murdered. One committed suicide. One is in exile.

The formerly declamatory tone of the characters is likewise replaced by more personal forms of communication. They start to write each other a series of wonderfully lyrical and self-indulgent letters, and one of the women characters begins to write a diary. At this point, it seems as though language and fiction finally supply the space for Hyder's characters, denied in the first part of the novel by document and history.

Fireflies in the Mist is a very complex and skilfully executed novel. Its interest to historians and other readers with an interest in Partition narratives cannot be overstated. For the general reader, as well, it offers a very interesting, informative, and well produced, if somewhat overpriced volume.

Leela Gandhi teaches English at Hindu College, Delhi University. Her doctoral work was on Shakespeare.

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Ethnocentric Tales

Angela Koreth

THE NAMASTE BOOK OF INDIAN SHORT STORIES: VOLUME I & II
Edited by Monisha Mukundan
UBSPD, New Delhi, 1992 & 94, pp. 152, Rs. 65.00 and Rs. 75.00

To return to the opening idea: Is the Gutenberg revolution over? Has the wheel turned full circle, and are we returning to a pre-print era, an aural-oral-visual one where reading as a leisure time activity stands threatened? With time at a premium, short stories, quickly focussed and mercifully brief, score over lengthier genres. One looks forward to such collections for encouraging both writers and non-readers who need to be introduced gently to the joy of reading through non-threatening anthologies such as these.

These are two handsomely produced volumes, economically priced and making a good gift for the festival season. The selection would have a ready appeal for a wide range of readers. As a teacher who is constantly made aware of the lack of interest in reading at most levels, one can only greet the publication of the volumes under review with appreciation. Today's is an "instant" culture; the immediate gratification that one has been trained to expect from the audio-visual media, makes the reading of lengthy fiction a minority pastime. Yet the literary hierarchy that ranks the novel higher than the short story remains. Though meeting a well-defined need, the short story gets short shrift, published as it is in journals and magazines of a transient nature. The present volumes are a selection of short stories from the annual issues of stories brought out since 1987 by the publishers of *Namaste*, a quarterly magazine about India. Their focus is obviously on the "Indianness" of the stories, since theirs is the conviction that to communicate "a perceptive understanding of India contemporary literature seemed a logical element of the whole." The theme of the hour is ethnocentricity, and the Indianness of the stories will also meet with a ready response from readers here and abroad.

Apart from giving the short story a more permanent material form and attempting to create its rightful place in the literary canon the *Namaste* project is a laudable one for one other reason in that it brings to the reader in English not only stories originally written in English, but also good translations of stories in other Indian languages. The effort, in the editor's words, is to publish "stories that have an integrity and strength of their own, without worrying too much about bureaucratic representation of all of India's languages or regions." Each volume contains ten stories; seven are translations in Volume 1, while only four in Volume 2 are translated. Obviously good translations are difficult to come by.

The authors included are some of them well-known and established, such as Ruskin Bond and Qurratulain Hyder, others are well-known in the regional language, such as R. Chudamani and Bibhuti Bhushan Bandhopadhyay, still others are artists (Manjula Padmanabhan) or writers of children's stories (Subhadra Sen Gupta). Since a couple of authors are repeated in the volumes the finding of good stories does not seem as serendipitous a business as the editor claims. Volume 2 scores over Volume 1 in that it contains illustrated responses to each story from the authors themselves or from artists. But in the main, some of the most moving stories appear in Volume 1. These include R. Chudamani's "Strands of Void", Subhadra Sen Gupta's "Sukoon" and Ram Lall's "The Grave". In Volume 2 Anupama Niranjana's "A Day with Charulata" is memorable.

To return to literary hierarchies: it is often assumed that the talent required to write a good short story is not a "weighty" one. Not necessarily, R. Chudamani's powerful "Strands of Void" reminds us that a short tale is not synonymous with a marginal one.

"I had a dream once. A beautiful dream, coming down through generations like an inheritance. You were the fragrance of that dream: God, do you remember it? When did you disappear? But even in the place you vacated there still remains another fragrance. After the fragrance of "you", the fragrance of "me". My doubt, my change, my denial—the fragrance of this colossal me. I stand in darkness. I stand alone. I stand before the question mark of the world. If I utter the word "God" henceforth it is the name of this courage."

"By its very nature" as the editor reminds us "a short story demands great discipline and clarity on the part of the writer."

Some of the stories in these collections are self-consciously Indian, written for a foreign readership. Ka Naa Subramanyam's "Kannan My Comrade" is one such. Others, like Manjula Padmanabhan's "Unfaithful Servants" have no specifically Indian flavour to them. The stories take many forms. "Unfaithful Servants" is science fiction. Qurratulain Hyder's "The Sound of Falling Leaves" verges on an allegory of the Partition, Subhadra Sen Gupta's "Old Fateh" is a historical romance. Nostalgic Reverie seems a popular mode with writers (Satyajit Ray's "The Two Magicians", Ram Lall's "The Grave"). With the exception of Subhadra Sen Gupta's "Sukoon" and Mala Marwah's "Inheriting the Family" stories written originally in English are not as moving as the translations. But "Sukoon" achieves both detachment and empathy.

"Mridula stared out over the rooftops, her feet propped on the verandah railing. The lights were coming on in the houses of Varanasi. The beggars would troop to the temples, the hippies to the bhang and charas *addas* by the ghats, the whores to street corners. Since time immemorial Varanasi has provided the vice, then offered the salvation, that's how it had survived."

In spite of the almost tourist guidish tone of this commentary this story dealing with suicidal despair and loneliness has great depth and a uniquely Indian feel to it.

To return to the opening idea: Is the Gutenberg revolution over? Has the wheel turned full circle, and are we returning to a pre-print era, an aural-oral-visual one where reading as a leisure time activity stands threatened? With time at a premium, short stories, quickly focussed and mercifully brief, score over lengthier genres. One looks forward to such collections for encouraging both writers and non-readers who need to be introduced gently to the joy of reading through non-threatening anthologies such as these.

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Drama of Three Lives

Rina Ramdev

THE MOUNTAIN OF SHIVA:A NOVEL

By Karan Singh

Sterling Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 100, Rs. 50.00

Idyllic Kashmir is where Karan Singh locates spiritual salvation for his emotionally frayed protagonist Ashok. *The Mountain of Shiva*, the title and force of the novel pulls Ashok through its mystique and promise of inner peace. Kashmir, as also the honeymooner's paradise draws the newly wed Ramesh and Shiela, who have inextricable links with Ashok's past. A school friendship with Ramesh gone sour due to suspicion and lack of trust, and a developing relationship in London with Shiela aborted by an arranged marriage by an ailing parent, form on a chance second meeting with Ashok a troubled lone triangle. The human drama seeks to arrange the subtext of Ashok's search for a meaningful existence through a denoument involving once again Ramesh's anger and jealousy, Shiela's helplessness and Ashok's inner turmoil.

The narrative shuns the dense complexity of discourse that surrounds spiritualism. This in fact lends itself open to a kind of privileging of the lone imbroglio over the spiritual advantage the narrative seeks to impart upon the hero. Ashok's graspings at the symbolism of the mountain of Shiva are loosely constructed upon his heartbreak over Ramesh and Sheela, the death of his father and his meeting with a Swami in his boyhood. A sensitivity that seems to be targeted at delving into "the whys and wherefores of existence seems overshadowed by Ashok's inability to stay and put up a fight in the face of odds—be they Ramesh's harsh accusations or Shiela's walking out on him. This reinforces his desperation for an escape from all that is painful and difficult and in the light of this his walking into Ananda Ashram at the close of the novel remains as a facilitated escape route.

Adding to the dubious culmination of the search is the charismatic blue-eyed fair-skinned figure of the Maharaj. The selection of a European is part of feature length references to the occident in the novel. A reconstruction that involves Ashok's study period in London and interestingly his reading on the flight to Srinagar. *The Ochre Robe*, which deals with an Austrian turned Hindu monk and which finally extends onto the Maharaj at Ananda Ashram. As a translator of human existence through the glowing promise of the *Upanishads*, the Maharaj seems to don his mantle through a suspiciously pre-determined stature that rests upon race and colour.

Th Mountain of Shiva caught in the drama of three lives develops the character of Ramesh largely in accordance to a contrasting set of responses to those of Ashok. Trapped in an identity forged through his profession as an officer in the Indian Army he is blustering and unimaginative, viewing Ashok's spiritual cravings with amusement and indifference and quite unable to see the saffron in the paddy fields. Shiela stands on the periphery responsible for initiating action yet muted by the clash between the two very different men in her life. Beautiful, intelligent yet constrained in the realm, the men chart out for her, Shiela never really steps out of the shadow of her stereotyping as obedient daughter and devoted wife.

The novel dwells lovingly on the beauty of Kashmir and the pleasure it affords to Ashok in epiphanic moments: "There was as it were, a mystic dimension in Kashmir that enthralled the soul and lifted it upwards". His sighting of the golden eagle in the valley is described in language that soars to poetic heights as the bird takes on the association of all that is powerful, complete and mystical. The same commitment to description is also evident in the recounting of the rapture shared by the boys Ashok and Ramesh in Pradhanpur at spotting a fish dance out of water and stay mid air in glistering suspension. The sharing and bonding between the friends is validated by authorial ratification through language.

The Mountain of Shiva tosses scenes from Pradhanpur, London and Delhi and views them periscopally through Kashmir, arranging an order and meaning for its seeker-protagonist. Scripturally the Maharaj's perception of reality is built upon detachment from the material through a winning over of the wilful will and ego. Yet what Ashok gleans, imbibes and applies to his situation is rather unclear. The novel tells an interesting story but does not satisfy the reader looking for a formulaic philosophy to orient his existence upon. Outside the arena of the text Ashok shall remain confused, craving for spiritual fulfilment that the *Mountain of Shiva* seems to promise.

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Second Move

Deepika Tandon

OPENING MOVES

By Shrilal Shukla

Penguin Books India, 1993, pp. 282, Rs. 85.00

Opening Moves or *Pehla Padav* is the second of Shrilal Shukla's works brought out in translation by Penguin India. Ascompared to his much acclaimed novel *Raag Darbari* (translated by Gillian Wright, Penguin Books), *Opening Moves* depicts an India of almost two decades later and the picture and writing are both correspondingly bleaker.

Opening Moves offers a perspective on life in the city seen from the point of view of Sattey alias Munshi alias Santosh Kumar, a farmer's son engaged in doing his LLB "by proxy". As an overseer on Parmatmaji's, the powerful advocate and zamindar's construction site, Sattey mediates between the upper and lower echelons of society. Empathising with the labourers in terms of economic oppression on the one hand, and sharing a special rapport with Parmatmaji because of family and village connections, Sattey is in a particularly advantageous position to comment on both the low life and the sordid aspects of high life in the city. An insignificant observer in his urban millieu, Sattey gives a no holds barred account of the collusion between contractors, government engineers, local hoods and overlords, petty politicians, the law and the police.

What distinguishes Sattey from the other characters in the novel is his sympathy for the labourers. In Shukla's inimitable style, in the initial section of the novel the source of this sympathy is traced back to Sattey's romantic longings for Jasoda, a woman labourer at the site. However, as the novel proceeds the inexplicable murder of Neta, Jasoda's husband, a pregnant Jasoda's helpless predicament, and his own ensuing frustration force Sattey into a positive self-realisation in terms of social action. As such, the novel can be read in terms of a late twentieth century, particularly Indian *bildungsroman*.

Shukla is however highly conscious of the fact that standing like this the plot of his novel reads like a contemporary Hindi film story based on the motif of an angry young man fighting corrupt social forces. The novel is characterised by a continuous slippage between fact and fiction, and a high level of self-conscious intertextuality bringing together various discourses that formulate the urban Indian consciousness. Thus Sattey struggles with the disjunction between his experience of the material reality of his own and the workers' lives, and the futile attempts at lending them coherence through the popular discourses of Hindi films, Hindu mythology, speeches on India's progress into the twenty-first century and an ethnic revivalism brought about by the electronic media.

The process of social revelation, and the accompanying development of Sattey's consciousness take place in Shukla's highly individual style, with its mixture of irony, fantasy, realism, warmth and bitterness. However, it is significant that *Opening Moves* to a large extent lacks the sublety, the sardonic humour and finally, the sheer vitality of *Raag Darbari*. Combatting rampant consumerism and an all pervasive violence, as well as the disillusionment and frustration engendered by them, the novel is characterised by a hard core realism that leaves no space for redeeming laughter. The style of the novel at places descends to a pathos bordering on the cliched:

> The workman who'd announced how well they'd eaten now stood up. He wore plastic chappals but I could see dried mud on his heel. The bunglow's clean white floor was now miles and miles away from these feet. The days were long gone when Parmatmaji's family called their farmhand 'uncle' and shared their paan with the workers. I took a two rupee note from my pocket and handed it to the mistri's assistant 'Go and take your paan at our old shop, friend'.
>
> 'There is no paan inside, its *tambul*'. (p. 169)

In its cynicism, and its dry, sometimes hackneyed style, the novel is not a pleasant, light read. However, in so far as it forces a highly politicised perspective on the reader, a perspective largely not available in Indian writing in English, it is a new experience, forcing the reader to think. The end of the novel marked as it is by Sattey's acknowledgement of a good education forming 'the ground work.... to break through a net of iron' (p. 285), can thus be read alternately as naive idealism, or as an attempt at resistance and positive social action, depending on the perspective of the reader.

Whatever the perspective, it has to be acknowledged that it is the hope that *Opening Moves* holds out, of relieving existential angst through social action that distinguishes it from a novel like Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August*—a novel with which it shares certain important features.

As David Rubin points out in his "Translator's Note", translating Shukla's prose is an extremely challenging task as it is "highly individual, sometimes colloquial, sometimes extremely complex, with frequent plays on words". (p. v). On the whole, Rubin does a competent job of translating into English. He succeeds in conveying both the sense of the phrase, and the feel of an alien culture and language, as in the literal translation of phrases like *hawa khana* into 'chewing the breeze'. In other cases, Rubin resorts to occasional footnotes to explain the meaning. However at times the footnotes, even if directed at a western readership seem unnecessary, eg. a jocular exchange between Sattey and his sister-in-law is accompanied by the note, "There is a traditionally warm and affectionate relationship between a young man and his older brother's wife" (p. 120).

At the end of the novel, this reader also found herself questioning the title substitution introduced by Rubin. As Rubin, himself points out, instead of translating the original title, *Pehla Padav*, he has provided an entirely new one, *Opening Moves*. *Pehla Padav* or "The First Stage of (or stop on) the journey" makes use of the journey metaphor signifying the first stage of Sattey's odyssey towards self-realization with which the novel ends. On the other hand "Opening Moves"—a metaphor taken from chess or game playing implies a definite game plan, and a pre-meditated control over the situation that the protagonist definitely lacks.

On he whole, *Opening Moves* thus forms a stimulating and thought-provoking whole. Readers looking for a repeat performance of *Raag Darbari* are however likely to find *Opening Moves* a disappointing experience. But once the initial resistance is overcome, in its own way *Opening Moves* provides an interesting read.

What distinguishes Sattey from the other characters in the novel is his sympathy for the labourers. In Shukla's inimitable style, in the initial section of the novel the source of this sympathy is traced back to Sattey's romantic longings for Jasoda, a woman labourer at the site. However, as the novel proceeds the inexplicable murder of Neta, Jasoda's husband, a pregnant Jasoda's helpless predicament, and his own ensuing frustration force Sattey into a positive self-realisation in terms of social action.

Opening Moves ***offers a perspective on life in the city seen from the point of view of Sattey alias Munshi alias Santosh Kumar, a farmer's son engaged in doing his LLB "by proxy". As an overseer on Parmatmaji's, the powerful advocate and zamindar's construction site, Sattey mediates between the upper and lower echelons of society. Empathising with the labourers in terms of economic oppression on the one hand, and sharing a special rapport with Parmatmaji because of family and village connections, Sattey is in a particularly advantageous position to comment on both the low life and the sordid aspects of high life in the city.***

Deepika Tandon is a student of M.Phil English at Delhi University. She is currently teaching English Literature at Indra Prastha College, Delhi University.

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Books In Brief

Teaching Anthropology Creatively, Edited by Paul A. Erickson

Anthropological Lives, by Paul A. Erickson
Reliance Publishing House, 1993, pp. 134 & 156, Rs. 150.00 & 175.00

The first of these two books is about (to quote the subtitle) 'strategies for teaching the central themes of anthropology'. There are 13 chapters, all by American teachers of the subject. They write from the perspectives of American *cultural* anthropology, with the students they teach in view. Needless to say, these are American students. For example, there is a chapter on 'employing native and area press as instructional aids'. The newspaper that is discussed is *Navajo Times*, which is brought out by the Amerindian people called the Navajo. Another chapter discusses commercial videos as a teaching aid, and the videos discussed are, of course, American. The discussions are generally brief, most of them about ten pages long.

Anthropological Lives is a book of thumbnail sketches, 45 lives, an average of two pages per life. American, French, British, 'Colonial' (read Australian) anthropologists (cultural, biological, etc.) are covered. Most of the people included are dead. Among the dead, such outstanding scholars as Radcliffe-Brown and Robert Redfield are missing. Among the living even such highly influential American cultural anthropologists as Clifford Geertz and Marshall Sahlins are not included. No Indians (from India) or Africans or Latin Americans are mentioned. From the point of view of Indian classrooms, the books are worthless. I do not see how they could be of much use in American universities either, but that is their business. I wonder why they have been published in India.

T.N. Madan *is Director, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi.*

Bluff Your Way in Gold; in whisky; in Seduction; in Sex; in Public Speaking; in Public Relations; as a Top Secretary; in Marketing; in Management; in Computers; in Small Business and the Bluffer's Guide to Bluffing
Lancer International, New Delhi, 1993, Rs. 38.00 each

The blurb on the back of the *Bluffer's Guides* has the *Sunday Telegraph* endorsing these slim volumes: "An amazing amount of solid fact disguised as frivolous observation". Having developed, from very early on, a respect for and dependence on *kunjis* I had seized upon these with some anticipation: particularly since these offered the equivalents of *Learn Arabic in Seven Days* in fields so varied.

Often wittily written, making no inordinate demands on the laity and interspersed with anecdotes of great bluffers from history the *Guides* themselves are not a bad read. *The Guide to Whisky* begins with refreshing candour that the bluffer need not put in any great amount of hard work since (1) No two whiskies are alike and (2) 99 per cent of whisky drinkers can't tell the difference between one and another until it is revealed. Thus forearmed one wonders why a bluffer needs the rest of the 50 odd pages which follow. Well, partly because he needs the key words also to pass off as an expert on whisky appreciation. Key words in fact are an important element of the *Bluffer's Guides*. *The Guide to Sex* is only keywords and brief biographies of sexual heroes: Messalina, Casanova, et al. *The Guide to Public Speaking* acquaints us with the idea that success in the art waits on those having a beginning and an end with the middle consisting of saying the same thing or nothing at all over and over again. It then goes on to execute this formula with some success for the next 60 pages.

I doubt however if *The Guide to Seduction* would stand upto the expectations it arouses. Necessary are expensive limousines, softly lit rooms, restaurants paid for in advance so that you know the name of the best dishes, the chef and the head waiter and are allowed to sign the bill at the end, and, beginnings such as "I haven't felt so relaxed in ages but can tell that something is bothering you". Remember also to be a little late (i.e. Seductee should be kept waiting just a little) and if asked for the reason invoke the Official Secrets Act.) Important in this art is also that seductions should never look as if they started out that way: the Seductee has to be allowed some measure of self respect. (*The Guide* rules out "Hey babe, fancy a quickie?" as a suitable opening).

All this usually should, according to the *Guide*, lead you to the Finale. This should be judged and played finely and involves (no particular order appears necessary): (a) the masterful assumption that you are going to spend the rest of the night together; (b) intense eye to eye contact and (c) gazes of burning intensity. If the return is a low sweet smile then you're up and away. Yet left wondering is the reader that with all this foreplay and finely judged and expensive moves of setting, occasion, preperations, seduction and denouncement where is the gentle art of bluffing?

Bluffing Your Way in Golf is also expensive but uncertain. *The Guide* takes you over the standard fare of clothes, bags, caps, clubs and balls. It bravely propounds the heresy that only 3 clubs (a putter, a sand wedge and a 5 iron are needed by most players). On clubs (including those with "Royal" attached to their names) it is eloquent about the necessity of the bluffer not being intimidated despite all attempts by the members to make you feel ill at ease and unwelcome. For this it is necessary to have a bold demeanour and as loud a voice that you can muster. So are the right clothes, and the expensive Golf apparel strongly advised to all bluffers, is in fact only for indoors. Yet the *Guide* disappoints at the most critical stage. Despite its standard advise (don't try to hit the ball too hard, keep your head down) it abandons the bluffer at his most vulnerable with its confession when you are about to tee off: ".... all that really matters. . . is that you get off the first tee in a respectable manner and out of sight of the regular members and the membership committee. How you achieve this is your business. Nobody can help." The bluffer is naturally indignant at this violation after 36 pages and left wondering if the rest of the 24 are worth it. No *kunji* of the old days would have been spared a second glance after such infedility.

T.C.A. Raghavan *belongs to the Indian Foreign Service.*

Night of the New Moon, by Anees Jung
Penguin Books, India, 1993, pp. 127, Rs. 85.00

This small book makes a large contribution to our understanding of the Indian Muslim women of today. Ms. Jung writes with her usual facility and treats her complex subject with insight and sympathy. She has travelled across India to places which are predominantly Muslim, talked to women from different backgrounds and shares with us the common experience that binds women in Islam. In Bengal, she meets a niece of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, who "has to go out and be like other women". In Hyderabad, the author's hometown, a Muslim lady insists that it is against her honour to be out on the street. Ms. Jung visits Ameena, the teenage bride rescued from an aging Arab husband, and talks also to Parizad who became a "spectator to my own wedding".

She travels to Bhopal—a city where she finds the women understand the rights given to them by Islam and do not just accept them because they are forced on them. Najma Heptullah, child of this city and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, gives an educated view of her religion.

The stories of these encounters tell us that for many Muslim women the "reason for their lives" was worked out centuries ago in a Bedouin Islam, and are interpreted today by men. The rules and regulations imposed by the Mullahs start and end with women and ensure that they lead limited and sheltered lives. These lives are mostly lived with other women, the young and, therefore, modern religion of Islam has become a wall around them, their faith, a state of mind to which they have been trained since childhood. The faith is deep and abiding, but gives them at best an acceptance of their lives as they are and a certain strength to bear misfortune. But it seems at times a desperate faith because there *is* nothing else. As Zahida says in the book "Angry with God? He is the only God I have. If I get angry with him to whom will I turn?" In the main these are nearly all sad lives—young girls thrilling to each morning and its promise of the world are by young womanhood trapped in enclosed courtyards, dimly-lit mansions or overcrowded backrooms. The ocean of life remains forever a "view from a small window".

Nita Srinivasan *is a freelance critic.*

Talwar, by Robert Carter
Viking/Penguin Books, India, 1993, pp. 452, Rs. 125.00

Two hundred years of the Raj have bequeathed an apparently unlimited legacy to generations of writers (British and Indian) to indulge their literary fantasies to the full. Talwar (the very title puts one on guard) is yet another fictional foray into 18th century India. The blurb claims Talwar to be 'a fabulous saga of India in the mighty tradition of *Shogun*'. Notwithstanding the author's acknowledgement of James Clavell's encouragement in the writing of *Talwar*, any similarity with his epic would be restricted to choice of theme only.

Characterisation is stereotyped and covers the usual gamut of crafty politicians, handsome princes, beautiful pricesses, brave soldiers of fortune and the inevitable courtesans all of whom appear in Raj novels in one *avatar* or another. The plot is also a hackneyed mix of politics, love, money and power the interactive results of which are sought to be linked directly or indirectly to the curse of the Koh-i-Noor diamond embedded in the Talwar. Since 1937 when the diamond was set into the State Crown of HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, the author explains that the Koh-i-Noor's ownership is only allowed to descend from woman to woman in the British Royal family.

Not much is known of the author Robert Carter whose education in the UK, Australia and USA was followed by stints with an American oil company and then with the BBC. His love for India has sent him here four times in the course of his travels, work and teaching 'in the wilder places of the earth'. Since this is a work of fiction, one will not cavil at the historical accuracy of India in the mid 1700s. This is the period chosen for the setting of the author's version of the Moghul Empire of the Carnatic (present day Tamil Nadu) encompassing English and French trade leases in Madras and Pondicherry respectively. Words are subject to the law of unexpected consequences and the nearly 2.5 lakh words of *Talwar* are no exception. They might keep adolescents (British and Indian) occupied awhile and they are certainly a boon to any adult who suffers from insomnia.

Kevin Parker *is General Manager, Exports, PEPSI Foods, New Delhi.*

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■ BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Points and Lines: Charat Ram: A Biography
M.V. Kamath
Among the industrialists of India Charat Ram's name has become synonymous with outstanding industrial achievements and development of excellence in management. In this biography the author charts the life of a man who put principles above politics and the company above family.
UBSPD, 1994, pp. 272, Rs 295.00

Badruddin Tyabji
Laeeq Futehally
This is a short biography on Badruddin Tyabji who picked what he saw as the highest standards from different cultures to which he was exposed. It is now nearly 90 years since his death but his central ideas are more relevant today than ever before.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 94, Rs. 21.00

Rajendra Prasad : Autobiography
This is the life story of the first President of India which is also a chronicle of the freedom struggle and contemporary Indian politics. The major part was written in prison between 1942-1945 and originally published in 1957. It was later translated into English by Dr Rajendra Prasad.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 624, Rs. 85.00

Climb, Boy, Climb! Chronicles of a Young Sailor
Harry Miller
The out break of the Second World war in 1939 when he is sixteen gives the author a chance to leave the dark and dismal climate of Swansea on the coast of Wales. Signing up as a boy sailor in Britain's Mercantile Marine he finds himself sailing the high seas. This is a rollicking sailor's tale laced with high drama and bawdy humour and a fascinating account of the human side of the bloody Battle of the Atlantic.
Penguin Books, 1994, pp 172, Rs 85.00

■ HISTORY

Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha
Edited by David Arnold and David Hardiman
The book consists of essays in honour of Ranajit Guha, the founding father of subaltern studies, by five members of the original editorial group. The essays take up themes from Guha's own work, linking subaltern experience and mentality with colonial knowledge/power and the cultural and political processes of Indian elites.
Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 240, Rs. 340.00

Ghadar Movement, Ideology, Organisation, Strategy
Harish K. Puri
The Ghadar movement, despite its brief duration, played a significant role in India's struggle for independence. The author studies here the ideology, organisation and strategy of the movement, its place in the context of Indian nationalism.
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1993, pp. 327, Rs. 200.00

Credit, Markets, and the Agrarian Economy of Colonial India
Edited by Sugata Bose
Part of the themes in Indian History series, this book focuses on a theme which has been central to all discussions of the colonial economy. Discussions on rural credit have now moved away from the simple issues of poverty and prosperity. Some historians have looked at different forms of credit, others have located the working of rural credit within the logic of the production system and still others have explored the cultural order. The essays here reflect the proliferating horizons among historians of rural credit.
Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 333, Rs. 290.

■ INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Two Asian Democracies: A Comparative Study of the Single Predominant Party Systems of India and Japan
Takako Hirose
The book analyses the differing roles of the single predominant parties of India and Japan—the Indian National Congress and the Liberal Democratic Party from the point of view of political development.
Konark Publishers, 1994, pp. 241, Rs. 225.00

Pakistan's Nuclear Policy
P.L. Bhola
The various attributes of Pakistan's nuclear policy as it developed under different regimes have been identified and discussed in detail.
Sterling Publishers, 1993, pp. 222, Rs. 200.00

Estranged Democracies: India and the United States 1941–1991
Dennis Kux
Political relations between the two countries have never been very close and this study traces the roots of the differences that continue to keep them apart. The author finds that these stem less from a lack of dialogue or from misperceptions than from fundamental disagreements over issues centering on national security interests.
Sage Publications, 1993, pp. 514, Rs. 375.00

GATT and India. The Politics of Agriculture
Devinder Sharma
In this book the author studies the various implications of 'Free Trade' as visualised by former GATT Secretary General Arthur Dunkel and the reason why the rich nations of the world led by the US are pushing for a GATT 'consensus' to protect their present previleged position.
Konark Publishers, 1994, pp. 198, Rs. 225.00

India's Foreign Policy
H.C. Shukul
There are numerous books on all aspects of India's Foreign Policy but none of them attempt to formulate a theoretical framework for its emergence as an independent area of study. This book fulfils this need.
Chanakya Publications, 1994, pp. 164, Rs. 200.00

Non alignment and the Non-aligned Movement in the Present World Order
M.S. Rajan
In this fifth volume of Professor Rajan's books on non-alignment and the non-aligned movement (NAM) he outlines the continuing relevance and validity of non-alignment and NAM in the present post Cold War World.
Konark Publishers, 1994, pp. 245, Rs. 300.00

■ LAW

Basic Principle of Modern International Law
V.S. Mani
This book attempts to relate the Declaration to the principal normative developments at the UN General Assembly since its adoption in 1970 through the 70's and 80's upto 1992.
Lancers Books, 1993, pp. 440, Rs. 425.00

Constitution of India Simplified
P.D. Mathew
To make the common man aware of his constitutional rights and duties the matter here is presented in simple language and question-answer format to help the reader to get an overall grasp of the contents and appreciate the vision of the constitution.
Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 339, Rs. 65.00

Our Judiciary
B.R. Agarwala
The author traces the development of the judiciary in India from ancient times to the present day taking the reader through the different levels of judiciary and providing information on the kinds of issues that can be taken up at each level.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 214, Rs. 33.00

■ LITERATURE, FICTION, POETRY

Billy
Albert French
The tale of Billy Lee Turner—a ten year old boy convicted for the murder of a white girl in Mississippi in 1937 illuminates the monstrous face of racism in America with clarity and power. Narrated in the rich accents of the American South, this is a story of racial injustice.
Minerva Press, 1994, pp. 214, £ 5.99

The Half-Inch Himalayas
Agha Shahid Ali
This volume of poems first appeared in 1987 and quickly established Agha Shahid Ali's stature as a poet. As one critic has put it this is a remarkable volume concerning nothing so much as the haunting of the poet by history and the past.
Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 57, Rs. 90.00

Semantic Universals in Indian Languages
Anvita Abbi
This is an important book in areal Typology of India as it establishes that typologically and genetically diverse languages of the country including the modern and tribal languages today share their linguistic structures which are manifestations of the shared underlying semantic structures.
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993, pp. 113, Rs. 100.00

■ POPULAR SCIENCE

Wind Energy
Suneel B. Athawale
There is a world of untapped energy within easy easy reach of human beings, and this book introduces the reader to this non-conventional source of energy. Diagrams and illustrations elucidate the text vividly.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 58, Rs. 26.00

Ways of the Weather
P.A. Menon
This book tells us about the how and why of atmospheric processes and weather generation and explains the concepts and practices in observing and forcasting weather. It highlights the impact of weather and climate on life and economy and provides information on the Indian climate.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 104, Rs. 33.00

Preservation of Art Objects and Library Materials
O.P. Agarwal
Art objects of all types, stone sculptures, wooden objects, textiles, manuscripts, paintings are constantly exposed to damage and deterioration. In order to preserve them under diverse conditions custodians must understand the nature of the dangers, their causes and their control/prevention techniques.
National Book Trust, 1994, pp. 102, Rs. 40.00

■ POPULATION STUDIES

The Inevitable Billion Plus, An Exploration of Inter connectivities and Action Possibilities in India
Edited by Vasant Gowariker
A collection of essays that point inexorably towards the need to develop the tools that science and technology might provide for resolving the population problem in ways that are at once effective and caring.
National Book Trust, 1993, pp. 320, Rs. 62.00

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NEW FROM OXFORD

India In Transition — By Jagdish Bhagwati

Jagdish Bhagwati, one of the world's leading economists, offers a fascinating overview of the policies that produced India's sorry economic performance over a third of a century.

His analysis puts into sharp focus the crippling effects of the inward-looking, bureaucratic regime that grew to kafkaesque dimensions, starting in the early 1950s. It provides therefore a coherent and convincing rationale for the economic reforms begun in June 1991 by the new government of Prime Minister Rao. These reforms, also discussed by Professor Bhagwati, are thus set into historical and analytical perspective.

Written with wit and elegance, this text of the 1992 Radhakrishnan Lectures at Oxford is readily accessible to a wide readership.

Jagdish Bhagwati is the Arthur Lehman Professor of Economics and Professor of Political Science at Columbia University. Since May 1991 he has been the Economic Policy Advisor to the Director-General of the GATT.

Rs 150

Nepal in the Nineties — Edited by Michael Hutt

The historic events that took place in Nepal in spring 1990 have yet to be forgotten. A broad-based democracy movement succeeded in removing the twenty-eight-year-old Panchayat system after a campaign that lasted only six weeks. Five months later a new constitution was promulgated and, just over a year after the ending of the agitation, the Nepali Congress party secured a majority in a general election. Briefly, before other events elsewhere nudged it out of the headlines, the political situation in Nepal was world news.

Western academic institutions contain a sprinkling of people from a variety of backgrounds who take a profound interest in Nepal. This book contains eight essays by Western academics which reflect on the changes that occurred in the kingdom as the decade began and on the circumstances that produced these changes.

Michael Hutt is Lecturer in Nepali at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London.

184 pages *Rs 240*

Managing Common Pool Resources — Edited by Katar Singh

Common Pool Resources (CPRS) (or natural resources used by people in common) constitute a significant proportion of the earth's total endowment. Most such resources, as everyone's cradle and nobody's baby, are over-exploited and neglected, subject to what Garrett Hardin in 1968 expressively termed the 'tragedy of the commons'.

India has nearly 100 million hectares of common pool land, about 30 million hectares of common pool forests, and the bulk of its water resources and fisheries are CPRs. Their restoration and management is crucial to the well-being of millions of the rural poor who depend upon them for a livelihood, and beyond that lies their relevance to the widespread environmental concerns of recent years so cogently voiced at the Earth Summit in June 1992.

Dr Katar Singh is Reserve Bank of India Chair Professor at the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) and currently teaches post-graduate courses on 'Common Pool Resources Management' and 'Rural Development'.

XX+366 pages *Rs 425*

Money and the Market in India 1100-1700 — Edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam

The histories of money and the market are everywhere intimately interlinked. Thus, economic historians of pre-colonial South Asia have always seen a close relationship between monetization and commercialization—the growing use of money on the one hand, and the growing orientation towards the market of producers (agriculturists and manufacturers) on the other. In the past four decades, writings on this theme have acquired a sharp focus.

The essays collected in this volume range in their focus from medieval Tamilnadu under the Colas to Maharashtra in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Some are clearly focused regional studies, while others are attempts at generalizing on a pan-Indian canvas.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam teaches economic history and economic development at the Delhi School of Economics. He works on early modern history and economic history, with particular interests in South India, Iberia and Indian Ocean trade.

328 pages *Rs 300*

Social Ecology — Edited by Ramachandra Guha

Social Ecology brings together a selection of pioneering essays on a subject of increasing interest to sociologists and social anthropologists. With the growing awareness of the causes and consequences of environmental degradation, the once neglected field of 'social ecology' has assumed enormous theoretical and practical import. The essays assembled in this Reader provide a 'state of the art' survey of the field as well as an orientation to future research.

As a volume in the Oxford in India Series in Sociology and Social Anthropology, *Social Ecology* is designed primarily for the student and researcher.

Ramachandra Guha is professorial fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and author of *The Unquiet Woods* (1989, PB 1991), *Wickets in the East* (1992, PB 1993), *This Fissured Land*, with M. Gadgil (1992).

408 pages *Rs 425*

Gautama Buddha — Iqbal Sin

For the past two thousand years and more the figure of Gautama the Buddha has attract hagiographers and legend-makers whose output has for the most part left readers with a sen of dissatisfaction and frustration. On the other hand, there has been a flood of arca scholarship on particular aspects of the Buddha's life, times, and teaching which has left t discriminating general reader unmoved. For him this biography, based on very extensi reading and written with rare elegance, delicacy, and verve will serve as an exhilarati breath of fresh air.

Rather than treating Gautama as an isolated and prodigious phenomenon, the auth views his life in the context of the important, eventful, and colourful age in which he live

This edition has a new chapter that evaluates subsequent research and writing on t Buddha's life and times, and major developments in the Buddhist world.

Iqbal Singh is a journalist and the author of several distinguished books on subjects rangin from politics and modern history to biography and foreign policy.

388 pages *Rs 35*

Elephant Days and Nights — Raman Sukuma

The elephant has enjoyed a unique relationship with the people of India. It is a keyston biological species in tropical forests across Asia and over the past four thousand years ha dominated the cultural, social and economic life of people as has no other creature. Ye elephants and people have also been in conflict; a conflict which now calls for urgent solution

The author has ben studying the life of wild elephants in southern India since 1980. Thi is the story of his work on elephants, of their ecology, social behaviour, interactions wit people and the problems they currently face. His account interweaves the biology of th elephant with observations of the animal in the field.

Raman Sukumar's study of the Asian elephant earned him a doctorate in 1985 from the Indian Institute of Science where he is currently on the faculty of the Centre for Ecological Sciences. He is also Deputy Chairman of IUCN's Asian Elephant Specialist Group and heads the Asian Elephant Conservation Centre.

204 pages *Rs 375*

Agrarian Questions — Edited by Kaushik Basu

Themes in Economics is a new series of books devoted to economic analysis relating to problems of the Indian economy.

This volume is a collection of essays which raises questions pertinent to agriculture. In the last two decades there have been rapid advances in the analysis of agrarian economic relations. A large literature has emerged on sharecropping, credit markets, and labour markets. Some of the issues examined in this book include power, coercion and freedom.

In addition to these theoretical issues, there is an extremely valuable bird's-eye view of the actual experience of Indian agriculture since independence in 1947.

This book is compelling reading for all those interested in agrarian economic relations and Indian agriculture.

Kaushik Basu is Professor of Economics, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

Rs 340

Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament

Edited by Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter Van Der Veer

In his extraordinarily influential book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said argued that Western knowledge about the Orient in the Post-Enlightenment period has been 'a systematic discourse by which Europe was able to manage—even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively.' According to Said, European and American views of the Orient *created* a reality in which the Oriental was forced to live Although Said's work deals primarily with discourse about the Arab world, much of his argument has been applied to other regions of 'the Orient'.

Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament provides new and important insights into the cultural embeddedness of power in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Carol A. Breckenridge is Senior Lecturer in the Humanities Division at the University of Chicago and Editor of *Public Culture*.

Peter Van Der Veer is Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *Gods on Earth and Hindus and Muslims*.

368 pages *Rs 300*

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